

AN
ESSAY
ON THE
CHARACTER
OF THE
APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS:

DESIGNED TO PROVE THAT THEY WERE NOT

ENTHUSIASTS;

CONTAINING THE

SUBSTANCE OF SEVERAL DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAPEL OF TRINITY-COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

BY THE

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*"Paul said, I am not man, most noble Festus, but speak the
words of truth and soberness.—Acts xxv. 26.*

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P R E F A C E.

THAT Christianity was founded on enthusiasm, was one of the earliest imputations thrown upon it. The politicians and philosophers of the Heathen world regarded the steadiness with which the primitive Christians sustained persecution, and the zeal they displayed in making profelytes, as certain proofs of obstinate fanaticism; and they conceived that the faith required as essential to the Christian profession was founded on blind credulity; disdaining to examine the doctrines, or weigh the evidence of an upstart Jewish sect, they satisfied themselves with such distant views, and such superficial objections as these, and too frequently dismissed the religion of the gospel as a sordid and gross superstition, unworthy the attention of a philosophic mind. We find the ancient apologists complaining of this proceeding, as most uncandid and irrational, and surely with good cause. “ Some (says ^a Tertullian) look upon it as
 “ madness, that when we might sacrifice at the mo-
 “ ment and depart uninjured, retaining in our mind
 “ a fixed resolution to continue firm to our religion,

^a Tertulliani Apologeticus, cap. xxvii. edit. Havercampi, Lugduni, 1718, p. 259.

“ we should prefer our obstinacy to our lives ;” and
 in the conclusion of his apology, “ ^b That, says he,
 “ which you call madness and despair in us, are the
 “ very actions which, under virtue’s standard, lift up
 “ your sons to fame and glory, and emblazon them
 “ to future ages.”—He then adduces the examples
 of Mutius Scævola, Regulus, the stoick Zeno, and
 the Lacedemonian youths, with some others, and he
 proceeds, “ Not one of these contemners of death
 “ and cruelty, in its several shapes, have had their
 “ actions sullied with the imputation of madness and
 “ despair. A man shall suffer with honour for his
 “ country, for the empire, for a friend, what he is
 “ not tolerated to suffer for his God. Strange! that
 “ you should look on the patience of Christians, as
 “ such, as an inglorious thing, and yet for the per-
 “ sons I have mentioned, cast statues and adorn
 “ figures with inscriptions and magnificent titles,
 “ to perpetuate the memory of their actions to eter-
 “ nity—to such an eternity as monuments can be-
 “ stow, and by this means give them a kind of re-
 “ surrection from the dead ; on the contrary, he
 “ who expects a real resurrection, and in hopes of
 “ this suffers for the word of God, shall pass among
 “ you for a sot and a madman.” And in the next
 paragraph he states, “ That which you reproach in
 “ us as stubbornness, has been the most instructive

^b Ib. p. 429. I have here adopted Reeves’s Translation,
 which, though sometimes vulgar, is here spirited and faithful.
 Vid. Reeves’s Apologies, vol. 1, p. 296.

“ mistress in profelyting the world ; for who has not
 “ been struck with the sight of what you call stub-
 “ bornness, and from thence been pushed on to look
 “ into the reality and reason of it, and who ever look-
 “ ed well into our religion but came over to it, and
 “ who ever came over to it, but was ready to suffer
 “ for it, to purchase the favour of God, and obtain
 “ the pardon of all his sins, though at the price of
 “ his blood, for martyrdom is sure of mercy.”

Thus in the ^c Octavius of Minucius Felix, Cæ-
 cilius, the advocate for idolatry, is introduced
 as reproaching the Christians with being “ a col-
 “ lection of fools only and credulous women, who
 “ by the weakness of their sex lie fairest for delusion.”
 Celsus urged the same objection ; he advises, says
^d Origen, “ that we should adopt opinions following
 “ the guidance of reason, since every deception
 “ arises from men not being thus disposed ; and he
 “ compares such as believe without reason, to those
 “ who are delighted with observers of omens, and
 “ jugglers, with magicians and bacchanalians, and with
 “ the visions of Hecate, and of other dæmons, for
 “ by such means artful men working on the simpli-
 “ city of those who are deceived, lead them which

^c Vid. Editionem Ouzeli, 4to. Lugduni, 1652, p. 8. Reeves's
 Apologies, vol. 2, p. 42.

^d Origen Contra Celsum, p. 8 ; in fine, Spencer's Edition,
 Cambridge, 1677, or Origenis Opera Studio Caroli Delarue,
 Paris, 1733, vol. 1, p. 327.

“ way they will, and this is the case among Chris-
 “ tians: for, (says Celsus) some of them do not
 “ choose to give or receive a reason for their faith,
 “ but employ this maxim—*do not enquire but believe,*
 “ *and your faith will save you*; and this, *the wisdom*
 “ *of the world is evil, but folly is good.*” In this
 passage we discover the ingenuity of the sophist mis-
 quoting the scripture he wishes to misrepresent; and in
 other passages he compares the “ appearances of
 “ our Lord, after his resurrection, to vulgar spectres
 “ and visions.” Thus also Eusebius, in the preface
 to his demonstration of the truth of the gospel,
 “ This work should be acceptable to the Greeks, if
 “ they would be reasonable, from the wonderful
 “ foreknowledge of futurity, and the accomplish-
 “ ment of events, according to predictions: thus
 “ at once shewing the divinity and certainty of the
 “ truth with us, and stopping the mouths of the
 “ patrons of falsehood by a rational proof, which
 “ these calumniators contend we cannot supply,
 “ maintaining every day, in their disputes with us,
 “ with their utmost strength, and insisting on this
 “ accusation, that we are able to establish nothing

^e Vid. Ibid. p. 98—354 and 355. Vid. in answer. Infra,
 chap. i. sect. 5.

^f Vid. this preface first printed by Fabricius in Greek and
 Latin, and prefixed to his *Delectus Argumentorum*, and
Syllabus Scriptorum qui Veritatem Religionis Christianæ
Asseruere. Hamburgi, 1725, p. 8 and 9. The same asser-
 tion is repeated, chap. i. Vid. Euseb. *Præp. Evangel.* Trans-
 lated by Vigerus. Paris, 1628.

“ by

“ by proof, but require those who come to us to depend on faith alone.”

The advocates of modern infidelity have not failed to revive this accusation against Christianity, and to support it with their utmost ingenuity. Lord Shaftesbury opens his works with a letter on enthusiasm; and after remarking, that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church, he ludicrously observes how much more than “ heathenishly cruel are those tolerating Englishmen, for not contented with denying the prophesying enthusiasts of our days the honours of a persecution, we have delivered them over to the cruellest contempt in the world. I am told for certain that they are at this time the subject of a choice droll or puppet shew at Bartlemy Fair; and while Bartlemy Fair is in possession of this privilege I dare stand surety to our national church, that no sect of enthusiasts, no new vendors of prophecy or miracles, shall ever get the start, or put her to the trouble of trying her strength with them in any case.” So far well; but the true object of his Lordship in these observations soon discovers itself. (“ I never heard, says he, that the antient Heathens were so well advised in their ill purpose of suppressing the Christian religion in its first rise, as to make use, at any time, of this Bartlemy Fair method. But this I am

^a Shaftesbury Characteristics, vol. 1, p. 27, 28, 6 edit. 1737.

“ persuaded

“ persuaded of, that had the truth of the gospel
 “ been any way surmountable, they would have bid
 “ fairer for silencing it, if they had chosen to bring
 “ our primitive founders upon the stage in a plea-
 “ santer way than that of bear-skins and pitched
 “ barrels.” He proceeds with more in the same
 strain, insinuating, that the ill success of the Jews,
 in not rooting out Christianity at its first original,
 arose from their being “ too dull and cloudy a people
 “ to exercise raillery on religious opinions, &c.” It
 cannot but be painful to a Christian mind to dwell on
 such passages as this. This noble Lord made ridicule
 the test of truth; to employ reason suited not his taste
 or his cause; in another place he tells us of “ this pro-
 “ phesying sect, who maintained that the antient
 “ prophets had the spirit upon them under extacy,
 “ with divers strange gestures of body, demon-
 “ strating them madmen or enthusiasts, as appears
 “ evidently from the instances of Balaam, Saul,
 “ David, &c. and who proceeded to justify this by the
 “ practice of the apostolic times, and by the regula-
 “ tions which the apostle himself applies to these
 “ seemingly irregular gifts, so frequent and ordinary
 “ (as our author pretends) in the primitive church,
 “ on the first rise and spreading of Christianity;”
 and he assures us, “ that he had seen this gentleman
 “ under an agitation, as they call it, uttering pro-
 “ phesy in a pompous Latin stile, of which, out of
 “ his extacy, it seems he is wholly incapable.”
 Whether his Lordship meant this *assertion* should
 “ pass

pass for a *jeſt*, I will not here pretend to determine ; but that he introduced it to discredit the gift of tongues, with which ſcripture declares the apoſtles were endowed, will not, I preſume, be denied. But objections ſuch as this, which this celebrated writer thought fit only to inſinuate, more hardy infidels have not hesitated to avow,

Mr. ^b Morgan, who diſtinguiſhed himſelf by the title of the Moral Philoſopher, aſſaults the character of St. Paul with peculiar virulence. The viſion ſpoken of in the 2d Epiſtle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. “is, in this “ writer’s opinion, an evident ¹ mark of enthuiſaſm, or “ there are no marks of it in the world.” And again he tells us, “ this ſaint had too much heat to reaſon “ coolly, and too great a crowd of tumultuous ideas “ to range them in good diſcipline, as the incohe- “ rence of his writings, the ſudden change of ſub- “ jects, and darkneſs of expreſſion ſhew, he was too “ full of alluſions, types and figures, to conſider “ rightly of realities. And againſt Chriſtianity in general he advances the ſame charge. “ If Chriſti- “ anity be not eſſentially enthuiſaſm, wherein does, “ the eſſence of Chriſtianity conſiſt? And again, “ if Chriſtianity teaches to believe and act contrary

^b Morgan’s Character of St. Paul examined, p. 45 and 51.

ⁱ Vid. in answer, *infra*, ch. v. throughout, but particularly ſection the 3d. Alſo, Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul.

“ to nature, is it not enthusiasm^k ?” That it does, this author attempts to prove, both by the speculative and the moral doctrines of the gospel.

These charges which had been brought forward against the gospel, irregularly and immethodically, were collected and arranged by another labourer in the cause of infidelity, who, under the semblance of a friend to Christianity, undertook to prove “ that it was *not founded on argument*, but faith alone ; “ and that the only means of coming at the knowledge of divine truths, is by a constant and particular revelation, imparted separately and supernaturally to every individual.” In the course of his reasoning on this subject, this author does not hesitate to assert, “ that our 'Saviour did not lay the arguments and proofs of his mission before his disciples, nor give them time to consider^m calmly of their force, and liberty to determine thereon as their reason should direct them : nay, he goes so far as to assert, that “ Christ had no intention to prove his own truth and character by his miracles, and that he was always remarkably upon the reserve in that respect^o wherever he happened amongst unbelieving company, and took particular care to prevent their coming to public

^k Vid. in answer, c. vi. of the following work.

^l Christianity, not founded on Argument, p. 36.

^m Vid. *Infra*, p. 9—13, in confutation of this.

ⁿ Vid. *Infra*, p. 48. in confutation of this.

^o Vid. *Infra*, chap. i. sect. 3, p. 29 to 31.

“ notice,

“ notice, by dismissing most of the company and
 “ attendants before he began to proceed to the ope-
 “ ration, and that he would not suffer his grateful
 “ patients to proclaim the benefits they had received,
 “ but enjoined them the strictest silence. *Tell no*
 “ *man*, was generally the charge.” And again,
 “ ^p that our Saviour would not work his miracles
 “ without stipulating constantly before-hand for pre-
 “ vious confidence and persuasion—*believe you that*
 “ *I am able to do this*, is the language of the gospel.”
 He even ^q asserts, “ that *whenever* we find these
 “ favours conferred, it was still perceiving that the
 “ ^r patient hath faith to be healed. He imputes the
 “ ^s conversion of the apostles to an internal and irre-
 “ sistible impulse, without the help of reason or
 “ evidence ; and says, that when at our Lord’s call
 “ ^t St. Matthew forsook all and followed him, it
 “ would seem strange, humanly considered, that he
 “ should thus precipitately desert a beneficial em-
 “ ployment for he knew not whom,” and, as he infi-
 nuates, they were converted without evidence,
 he also states, that they converted others in the same
 manner. “ They too (we are told) tread perpetually

^p Vid. *Infra*, p. 29 to 31, and the references in the Appendix.

^q P. 49, 50, of Christianity not founded on Argument. In confutation of this, Vid. *Infra*, p. 18 to 21.

^r Vid. *Infra*, p. 15 to 18, and the Appendix.

^s Vid. *Infra*, the entire first chapter, in answer to this.

^t Vid. *Infra*, p. 65.

^u *Ib.* p. 38 and 39, in answer. Vid. *Infra*, the entire second chapter, particularly section 1 and 4.

in their Master's steps; " they laid not the arguments
 " and proofs of their mission before their disciples,
 " but insisted constantly on the ready acknowledge-
 " ment of their doctrines, without any concession of
 " time for doubt or deliberation.—Of the terms of the
 " covenant, one declaration was often thought suffi-
 " cient.—Not to accept them, was to reject them; and
 " the least standing off gave up the unbeliever to repro-
 " bation."—For conveying deliberate and rational in-
 " struction, he tells us the apostles were ill qualified;
 " they had neither leisure nor qualifications for such a
 " method; they could have *no time to spare*, if they
 " were so disposed; their commission required them
 " to keep stirring; they could not afford to attend to
 " impertinent queries, and lose their precious mo-
 " ments in controversies, and therefore it was abso-
 " lutely requisite, from their circumstances, that
 " their hearers should come in at a short warning,
 " to snatch the critical opportunity; that they should
 " be expeditious in their motions, and comply
 " without the least hesitation."

Such are the general outlines of this author's plan,
 and if his facts were true his inference would be un-
 doubtedly well-founded; but I am compelled by the
 force of truth, combined with the interest of religion,
 to assert (what I think the following work will prove)
 that his statement of facts is *untrue*, founded on a
 gross misrepresentation of the gospel history; and I
 have quoted his assertions to enable my readers to
 compare

compare them with the statements of the following work, and with the scripture itself, that they may thence learn diffidence and caution, when studying the writings of the adversaries to Christianity, and not without a due enquiry rely on the strongest assertions as to the plainest facts, when irreligion and sophistry direct the pen.

It is not my intention to detain my reader, by enumerating the various grounds of doubt and objection advanced on this subject, by Collins and Woolston, Chubb and Bolingbroke. These writers, as well as those, whose objections I have quoted, have been indeed so fairly and fully answered, that it might have been hoped this objection would not again have been brought forward; but at this time, which unhappily may be characterized as peculiarly productive of levity, scepticism and profaneness, there is no objection to the gospel, however obsolete and plainly refuted, which has not been revived with zeal and pressed with confidence. Nor is this difficult to account for. When the scriptures are least studied, objections against them will ever appear most plausible, and where the restraints of the divine law are least regarded, its evidence will always be attacked with most zeal and most success. Even ignorance itself will encrease the confidence of the objector; for in every extensive scheme, supported by

* lb. p. 38, 39. Vid. *Infra*, chap. ii. sect. 5.

historical evidence, doubts and difficulties float upon the surface, their solutions cannot be found without a deeper search, and the exercise of sober enquiry and patient attention. To superficial enquirers every objection is new, and the answer to every objection is unknown: hence old difficulties are revived when their solutions are forgotten, and the writers who discussed them, sleep undisturbed in the deepest recesses of our libraries. Thus it has fared with the subject of the following essay: Monsieur ' Boulanger, whose works are distinguished with the title of the Philosophic Library, and were published from the Philosophic Press in Switzerland in 1791, has employed one volume in unmasking (as he terms it) Christianity, and another, in a critical examination of St. Paul, and has retailed every objection of the English Deistical writers with the fullest confidence, without once deigning to notice any of the answers given to them; amongst these, that of enthusiasm holds a distinguished place. A few extracts will shew the warmth of this writer's zeal, the unrestrained freedom and wide extent of his assertions. In his preface he tells us, " that wherever we turn our ob-
 " servation we see the study of the objects most im-
 " portant for man totally neglected. Morality,
 " under which I comprehend the science of policy,
 " is almost totally neglected in European education;

' Boulanger, tome 7, p. 22, 23, 24. Vid. in answer, if indeed it requires an answer, *infra*, the third and sixth chapter. I have been careful to translate this author literally.

imprinted

English

“ the only morality which is taught to Christians is
 “ that enthusiastic, impracticable, contradictory, un-
 “ certain morality, which we see contained in the
 “ gospel, which is only fitted (as I believe I have
 “ proved) to degrade the spirit, to render virtue
 “ hateful, to form abject slaves, to break the spring
 “ of the soul, or, if it is implanted in warm tempers,
 “ it produces nothing but fanatics capable of over-
 “ turning the foundations of society. Yet in spite
 “ of the inutility, and the perverseness of that mora-
 “ lity in which Christianity trains men, its defenders
 “ presume to tell us, that without religion one can-
 “ not preserve morals; but what is it to preserve
 “ good morals in the language of Christians? It is to
 “ *pray without ceasing*, to frequent churches, to do
 “ penance, to live in abstraction and retirement.
 “ What good can result to society from such practices
 “ as these, which one can observe without having
 “ the shadow of virtue? If morals of this kind lead
 “ to heaven, they are most useless upon earth. If
 “ these are virtues, we must admit that without religi-
 “ on it is impossible to preserve virtue; but, on the other
 “ hand, one may observe strictly every thing which
 “ Christianity recommends, without having any
 “ one of those virtues which reason points out to us
 “ as necessary to sustain political societies. We must
 “ therefore carefully distinguish religious morality
 “ from social morality; the first makes saints, the
 “ other citizens: the one renders men useless, or even
 “ mischievous, to the world; the other ought to have
 “ for

“ for its object to form for society useful, active
 “ members capable of serving it, who may fulfil the
 “ duties of husbands and fathers, of friends, and asso-
 “ ciates; however different their metaphysical opini-
 “ ons may be, which, whatever theology may say,
 “ are much less certain than the invariable rules of
 “ good sense.

In another ^a place he tells us, that “ it is impossi-
 “ ble to follow the precepts of a reasonable morality;
 “ under a religion which makes a merit of zeal, of
 “ enthusiasm, of fanaticism the most destructive; he
 “ attributes to Christianity, persecution, intolerance;
 “ fomenting sedition and regicide in favour of religi-
 “ on. ^a *To love our neighbour as ourselves—to love*
 “ *our enemies—to resist not evil*—all these he attri-
 “ butes to fanaticism. ^b It may be asserted, says he,
 “ in general, that fanaticism and enthusiasm are the
 “ foundation of the morality of Christ.—The virtues
 “ which he recommends tend to isolate men from
 “ each other, to plunge them into a gloomy humour;
 “ to render them pernicious to their fellow-crea-
 “ tures.” Faith and hope he ridicules, charity he
 pronounces difficult, if not impossible, in Christianity.
 Christian humility is, according to ^c him, “ only pro-

^a Boulanger, tome 7, p. 193 to 203.

^a Ib. 215 to 221.

^b Vid. Ib. p. 222 to 238.

^c Vid. Ib. p. 240.

“per to degrade man, to debase him in his own eyes, to stifle all desire of rendering himself useful to society, &c.” In another place he tells us, that it is evident that in Christianity “marriage is regarded as a state of imperfection.” Prayer,—Rest on sabbaths, and festivals, fall under his severest ridicule: Such is the picture which the writer has drawn of Christian morality: We are able to trace in it some ideas which may have been suggested by the celibacy of the papal clergy, the solitude and rigour of monastic life, and the extravagance of some sects of fanatics, at some few places, and for short periods; but how wonderfully distorted and overcharged is the portraiture even of those, and what have they to do with the morality of the gospel?—Yet in other places the picture is drawn in colours still more hideous. But I have quoted enough to give my readers a specimen of the turn of thought of writers such as this, sufficient, I should hope, to induce them to weigh their opinions and their proofs with great care, before they adopt them as just and conclusive, and to compare their representations accurately with the originals which they pretend to describe, before they suppose a resemblance.—After this view of Christian morality we are not to wonder that the same writer speaks in the same stile of the first teachers of Christianity. Of the Jews, he says, “that the Jew was

^d Boulanger, tome 7, p. 240

^e Vid. lb p. 59.

“ always the victim, and the dupe of his inspired
 “ teachers, and that in his greatest miseries his pre-
 “ sumptuous fanaticism, his senseless hopes, his cre-
 “ dulity, which could not be tired out, sustained
 “ him against the strokes of fortune ; in fine, con-
 “ quered with the rest of the world, Judæa submit-
 “ ted to the Roman yoke. Then, chagrined by
 “ misfortune, the Jew became more seditious, more
 “ fanatical, and more blind ; proud of the promises
 “ of his God, and full of confidence in those ora-
 “ cles which announced to him a state of happiness
 “ he never has enjoyed, encouraged by enthusiasts
 “ or impostors, who incessantly sported with its cre-
 “ dulity, the Jewish nation always looked for a
 “ Messiah, a monarch, a deliverer, who should dis-
 “ engage it from the yoke under which it groaned,
 “ and exalt it to reign over all the nations of the
 “ universe.”

Speaking of the disciples of our Lord, he says,
 “ ^s these men, either impostors or dupes, gave the
 “ most striking testimony of his power, and pretend-
 “ ed that his mission was proved by miracles without
 “ number.” And afterwards, ^h “ Paul, the most am-

^f This is certainly true ; how then happened it that Christ
 should be the only person who, claiming the character of the
 the Messiah, renounced all temporal views, and the only one
 whose claim has been successful.

^s Boul. ib. p. 61 and 64. Vid. in answer the 1st, 2d, and 3d
 chapters.

^h Vid. Boul. tome 7, p. 118, and in answer, the 1st and 2d
 chapters of the following work,

“ bitious,

" bitious, and the most enthusiastic of the disciples of
 " Jesus, carried this doctrine (viz. that of Plato
 " combined with Christianity) seasoned with the
 " sublime and the marvellous, to the people of
 " Greece and Asia, and even to the inhabitants of
 " Rome ; he had followers, because every man who
 " addresses himself to the imagination of the vulgar,
 " will engage them in his interests." And again,
 " The pretended miracles which Christianityⁱ relates,
 " like those of all other religions, have no other
 " foundations but the credulity, the enthusiasm, and
 " the ignorance of the populace, and the address of
 " impostors." Speaking of the martyrs, ^{*} he says,
 " all strong passions have their martyrs, Pride,
 " Vanity, Prejudices, Love, Enthusiasm for the pub-
 " lic good. Even Guilt itself produces martyrs
 " every day, or at least makes those, whom such ob-
 " jects intoxicate, close their eyes against dangers—
 " is it then wonderful that enthusiasm and fanati-
 " ticism, two passions the strongest amongst men,
 " should have so often made those who are intoxicat-
 " ed with the hopes which they inspire, encounter
 " death." And again—" the firmness of the first
 " Christians must, by a natural effect, have formed
 " profelytes, and the martyrs prove nothing but the
 " force of enthusiasm, of blindness, of obstinacy,

ⁱ Vid. Boul., tom. 7, p. 118, and in answer 1st and 2d chapters of the following work.

^{*} Ib. p. 132, 133.

“ which superstition can produce, and the senseless
 “ cruelty of all those who persecute their fellow-
 “ creatures for religious opinions.”

Speaking of the scriptures, he tells us—“¹ in the
 “ Old Testament every thing breathes enthusiasm,
 “ fanaticism, and madness, often dressed up in pom-
 “ pous language.”—Of the New, he says, “ that if
 “ we cast our eyes over the New Testament, we
 “ shall in the same manner see in it nothing which
 “ announces that ^a spirit of truth which it is supposed
 “ has dictated that work.” Of ^a St. Paul, he says,
 “ we find the same errors in that pompous nonsense,
 “ attributed to St. Paul; this man, filled with the
 “ divine spirit, exhibits nothing in his discourses
 “ and his epistles but the enthusiasm of a madman.
 “ The most studied commentaries cannot enable us
 “ to understand or reconcile those incoherent contra-
 “ dictions with which his works are filled, or the un-
 “ steadiness of his conduct, sometimes favourable,
 “ and sometimes opposed to Judaism.” In one
 word he tells us, “ Paul became the soul of his sect,
 “ his enthusiasm communicated itself; he braved
 “ dangers, while busied in encreasing the number
 “ of his partizans.”

Such are the opinions and language of this writer.

¹ Vid. Boulanger, tome 7, p. 179 and 180.

^m Vid. in answer, chap. iii. iv. v. and vi. of the following work.

^a Vid. Infra, chap. iii. sect. 4, in answer to this charge.

If they were peculiar to himself, they would perhaps merit little attention ; but * unhappily such opinions and such language are too generally adopted, particularly by this author's countrymen. In that general revolution of opinion which has taken place in that great nation, we have seen it pass, from an apparently blind acquiescence, in all the corruptions and abuses which had been engrafted on the gospel during the dark ages of Gothic ignorance, and papal usurpation, to as blind and indiscriminate a condemnation of the entire Christian scheme. The abuses and corruptions of the gospel have been mistaken for the gospel itself, and both have too frequently been rejected together : hence we find, that in the pamphlets and journals of the day, in the language of the populace, and sometimes in more grave writings, and more dignified assemblies, fanaticism and Christianity have passed for synonymous terms. " That fanatical priests wish to delude the people, by preaching fanatical doctrines, and reviving a fanatical worship," is the frequent subject of complaint and alarm. I am far from accusing or suspecting the majority of the nation, or its rulers, of entertaining errors such as these ; but they have extended so widely, as should rouse every friend to truth and piety to prevent their further spread. If

* Mr. Paine in his *Age of Reason*, part 2d, revives the charge of fanaticism against St. Paul ; he however dwells on it only in a single sentence, and confesses that he only copies Boulanger.

the sober and benevolent system of the gospel has been stigmatized as the offspring of fanaticism, and the parent of bigotry and persecution, it seemed no unseasonable or useless attempt to resort to that gospel itself, and from its plain narration and unadulterated doctrines, vindicate it from those foul aspersions which have no semblance of truth, except when for the divine original men substitute the corruptions of human fraud or folly, and the misdeeds of pride and cruelty, which in ages of barbarism and violence usurped and abused the sacred name of our holy religion. From a wish to contribute something to prevent the spread of error, prejudice and impiety, the writer of the following work has endeavoured to vindicate the characters of the apostles and evangelists from an accusation now so popular. Writing principally for the young and uninformed, he has freely used, and gratefully acknowledged, the assistance of those writers who have treated of the evidence and doctrines of Christianity, by almost all of whom this subject has been *incidentally* touched on, and by some more fully. He has not however confined himself entirely to their ideas, but has endeavoured by studying the scriptures themselves, to confirm the conclusion he wished to establish, by a greater variety of arguments, and a more full induction of particulars than entered into the plan of *any one* preceding writer. He has chosen to throw his thoughts into the form of a direct proof, rather than that of a particular refutation of objections, as better calculated to shew the real strength of the evidence which

- scripture

scripture supplies on this topic, and more free from the intricacy and obscurity of controversy, so apt to disgust that class of readers, for whom the following pages are chiefly designed.

It will not, he hopes, be deemed a deviation from due attention to his principal design, that where the same facts have served to prove that the apostles and evangelists were not fraudulent deceivers, as well as to evince their freedom from enthusiasm; this has been noticed. In fact, these two topics neither can nor ought to be considered as entirely separate and unconnected. It is the observation of the sagacious ° Warburton, “ that the most successful impostors, “ as we say, have set out in all the blaze of fanaticism, and completed their schemes amidst the “ cool depth and stillness of politics ;” and he has illustrated the nature of this strange union of fraud and fanaticism, as well by the nature of the human mind, as by the examples of Mahomet, Ignatius Loyola, (the founder of the Jesuits) and Oliver Cromwell; it was therefore desirable to point out how totally free the first preachers of Christianity were from both these characters. In truth, integrity, as well as sobriety of mind, are so conspicuous in the conduct and writings of the apostles, that a patient and candid enquirer can scarcely suspect them of fraud or fanaticism in any step of their progress.

° Vid. Warburton's Divine Legation, book 3, sect. 6, subject 3.

Having mentioned Warburton, it seems indispensibly necessary to vindicate the author from the charge of presumption, in attempting a subject which that celebrated writer has discussed in his Sermons on enthusiasm, and his Doctrine of Grace; it is therefore necessary to remark, that the design of the following work is widely different from that of the learned prelate, who ^p laboured more to expose what he

^p The same observation which is here made on Warburton, applies to most of the principle works on Fanaticism. To Bishop Stillingfleet's Discourse of the Idolatry and Fanaticism of the Church of Rome, c. iv. To the Comparison between the enthusiasm of the papists, and some modern sectaries, in 2 vols. Lond. 1751. To Hicks's Spirit of Enthusiasm exorcised, Lond. 1709. To Lee's History of Montanism. To, The New Pretenders to Prophecy, examined—both annexed to Dr. Hicks's work. To Stinstra's Essay on Fanaticism, translated from the Dutch, and published in Dublin, 1774, by the Rev. Isaac Subremont. The learned Merick Casaubon has exhibited a View of the different Species of Enthusiasm, in a treatise on that subject, published Lond. 1656, which contains much curious information;—but in none of these works has it been the object to exhibit a connected view of the direct proofs, which form the subject of the following essay. Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul, and Dr. Archibald Campbell in his Essay to prove the Apostles were not Enthusiasts, have briefly noticed many of these proofs, but the former confines himself to that single fact, which was the peculiar object of his work, and the latter extends his argument no farther than to shew that the Apostles were not Enthusiasts in their Belief of the *Resurrection* of our Lord—on this account the author of the following pages, while he acknowledges the great assistance he has received from these learned writers, is yet led to believe that they do not anticipate the object, or supersede the necessity of a more extensive view of this important

he conceived to be the errors and extravagancies of a particular sect of Christians, than to illustrate the general evidence of Christianity itself; this last is the sole object of these pages, in which the author anxiously wishes not a single thought may be found, that has not a tendency to promote, amongst all sects of sincere Christians, that mutual charity and brotherly love, which are perpetually recommended in the gospel of peace. Happy, indeed, would be the consequence if different sects were anxious, not only to remove from the tenets of their faith those errors, which each maintain have infected every other, and to unite the truths which each receive; but if besides this, they perpetually laboured to purify their practice from every thing similar to the misconduct, which in others they condemn, and to unite in it every excellence, for which any other description of their brethren is peculiarly distinguished, and thus ^a *provoke one another to love, and to good works*. Were this done, diversity of opinion would contribute to ex-
cite

important subject, which should consider the *conduct*, the *writings*, and the *doctrines* of all the apostles, and should exclude those controversies which, in so many other works, have diverted the attention of their authors from these grand objects.

^a Hebrews, x. 24.

The following observation of the eminently pious and sagacious Hartley on this subject, is well worthy the most serious attention. Hartley on the Truth of the Christian Religion, prop. 45, vol. 2, of his works, p. 194; or Watson's Tracts, vol. 1. "The success of sects has, in general, been owing to
" their making greater pretences to purity and gospel per-
" fection

cite emulation in active virtue ; thus too, endeavouring to trace the praise-worthy conduct of those who dissent from us, we should be frequently led to observe, that even those who differ from us most did, notwithstanding, in many instances, exhibit models well worthy of our imitation : hence, where we could not approve of their principles, we should give them due credit for their conduct as better than these principles, and none would dare to pronounce men excluded from the pale of salvation, who thus, in many instances, might appear better than themselves. An historical view of the conduct of different sects, thus designed to place their merits, as well as their demerits, in a clear light, unclouded by calumny and prejudice, by bigotry and misrepresentation, and to collect the peculiar virtues of each for the common imitation of all, would perhaps materially contribute to smooth the asperity of controversy, and extend the mildness of toleration ; it would exhibit a view of ecclesiastical history, well calculated

“ section than the established churches, and to their both teaching and practising some necessary duties which established churches have too much neglected in the corrupted state of Christianity. Every sect of Christians has magnified some great truth, not above its real value, but above the value which other sects have set upon it, and by this means each important religious truth has had the advantage of being set in a full light by some party or other, though too much neglected by the rest ; and the true catholic church, and communion of saints, unites all these sects, by taking what is right from each, and leaving the errors, falsehoods, and corruptions of each, to combat and destroy one another.

to improve the friends, and conciliate the adversaries of religion. The author has been impressed with these sentiments, from having been led, while compiling the following work, to observe the earnestness with which the apostles labour to guard against division and animosity, heat and violence, in consequence of differences in religious opinions; and he shall deem himself happy, if by leading the attention of others to the same passages, he should in any degree contribute to extend the benign influence of Christian charity.

The strictness of criticism will, it is feared, too often have reason to censure the style of the following work, as partaking much more of the language and manner of a popular address, than ought to be admitted in an argumentative essay. Some indulgence however is hoped for in this respect, when it is considered that these pages were originally composed as popular discourses, addressed to an audience of young men, and that they are now published principally for their use. They have been thrown into their present form, as it appeared best adapted to exhibit distinctly the subdivisions of the subject, and the progress of the argument; but the original style was retained, as it seemed best calculated to keep up the attention of that class of readers, for whom it was principally designed. But it were

* Vid. *Infra*, p. 200 to 203—229 to 234 and 240 to 245.

well if in this respect only the author stood in need of indulgence, he is thoroughly conscious of other defects of a far weightier kind: still however he hopes this work may serve the cause of true religion; but conscious of its defects, he ought not to publish it, without earnestly entreating his reader, if any objection he had expected to be removed, appears to be answered inadequately, or not answered at all; to impute this to its true source, the insufficiency of the advocate, not the weakness of the cause. Assuredly the cause of the gospel is the cause of truth and heaven, however it may be obscured or disgraced by human folly and human error.—No, let me conclude this Preface, by conjuring my young readers, for whose use this work is particularly designed, not to suffer themselves to be induced by sophistry, or by ridicule, to confound the sound doctrines of genuine Christianity, with the extravagant absurdities, or the fraudulent corruptions, which in different periods and countries have been substituted in its room. You, my young friends, are yet to form your religious opinions, and fix your religious principles, it infinitely imports you to judge aright, and steadily to adhere to that judgment; and never can you judge surely and safely of the character of the gospel, without you devoutly and humbly study the gospel itself. If you view it as represented by the enemies of our holy faith, you will assuredly find it (as you may well suppose) industriously and grossly misrepresented. You will find ridicule frequently employed to supply
the

the place of argument, rational piety burlesqued as madness or hypocrisy, and Christian purity and virtue derided as fanatic austerity. Is any passage or doctrine of the bible obscure or difficult? Some writers will state it as wholly unintelligible and absurd. Has folly mistaken, or fraud corrupted, its real tenets? Every error and every corruption is, by its enemies, blended and incorporated with the pure original, till reason turns disgusted from the foul and loathsome mass. And if it is utterly unreasonable to rely upon the representations of enemies, it may perhaps sometimes not be entirely safe to derive your conceptions of Christianity even from the statement of its friends. In writers, whose delight is in metaphysical discussion, and whose talent is subtilty, your attention will be diverted from the most important doctrines of the gospel, merely because they are plain, and from its most decisive proofs, because they admit of no dispute. In abstract reasoners you will miss that practical instruction which every page of the New Testament conveys; and in the works of the over-bearing dogmatist, and the angry disputant, you will seek in vain for the spirit of humility, and kindness, and tenderness, and piety, which the apostles and evangelists, uniformly display. In the compositions of some zealous and well-intentioned, but over-warm, indiscreet, or ill-informed Christians, you may sometimes meet with doctrines strained to excess, and precepts stated without those limitations and exceptions, which the sobriety of truth requires. In speaking
thus,

thus, I do not mean that you should reject all aid from the researches of the pious and the good, far otherwise. I only wish to impress upon you, that you are not to rely on any secondary information, without recurring frequently and humbly to the divine original. In truth, there is much of the evidence and the instruction of the sacred volume, which can only be felt by studying that volume itself. The artlessness, the honesty, the zeal, the purity, the piety, the love of truth which shine in every page of the New Testament, cannot be transfused into any comment, or any argument which human ingenuity can frame; these are the marks of sound doctrine, which will always make the deepest impression on the most virtuous hearts.

Study then the scriptures; thus will you learn to value Christianity as you ought, as the source of rational piety and joy in every situation of life, as the certain guide to truth and happiness. Are you to become its teachers?—thus only can you imbibe the genuine spirit, and the uncorrupted tenets of that holy religion you profess to teach; thus only can you be enabled to deliver its doctrines free from error, and exemplify its utility by the holiness of your lives; thus only can you save yourselves, and those that hear you, and give a good account at the great and fearful day of final retribution.

A N

ESSAY, &c.

CHAPTER I.

The apostles and evangelists were not enthusiasts, because they did not embrace the faith which they taught, till they had required and received sufficient proofs of its divine original.

SECTION I.

The general statement and division of the subject.

IN reasoning on the evidence of Christianity, it has been frequently remarked, that almost all direct arguments for the certainty of the gospel history, may be reduced to two heads; 1st. that the founders of the Christian scheme did not mean to deceive; 2dly, that they were not themselves deceived in those facts to which they appealed in proof of a divine interposition.

On the first head the utmost ingenuity of infidelity has scarcely been able to discover any plausible objection. The proofs of *sincerity* in the lives and writings of the first teachers of the gospel are obvious—I had almost said irresistible. Men who voluntarily abandoned every worldly interest, who deliberately encountered and steadily sustained reproach, persecution, and death, in support of the cause which they espoused—must have been sincere.—This point therefore, the advocates for infidelity have generally found it necessary to admit, and to take refuge under the pretext, that however sincere and well-meaning the apostles and evangelists may have been, they were yet deluded by the violence of religious enthusiasm, which is so frequently found to disturb reason, and to give to mere visions of a heated brain the semblance of reality.—A pretext the more plausible, because in some leading features enthusiasm must bear a strong similarity to genuine inspiration: as the latter pre-supposes sincerity and piety, the former may arise from zeal sincere but ill-directed, from devotion heart-felt but overstrained—both assert their claim to attention as derived from God—both are ready to sacrifice every worldly object in the execution of their purpose—and therefore by mere worldly minds, both will too often be pronounced equally irrational and extravagant. But the sincere and ingenuous enquirer after religious truth will not adopt an opinion, as inconsistent with true philosophy, as it is subversive of Christianity;

Christianity; he will not confound the frenzy of fanaticism with the calm and sacred voice of the Spirit of God, but, with me, endeavour to trace the plain marks which distinguish Christianity from enthusiasm, and evince that the apostles and evangelists spoke the words of truth and soberness.

What then is enthusiasm in its true and proper sense?—Briefly a strong but groundless persuasion of being actuated by divine inspiration, including *two essential characters*, the *first*^a that this opinion has been adopted, by him who believes himself inspired, *without sufficient evidence*^b—the *second*, that if he requires others should also admit the reality of his inspiration, he insists on their doing so, without demanding any proof, or at least on grounds as vain and delusive as those which have satisfied himself.—Thus blind credulity and dictatorial positiveness form the two leading and essential marks of an enthusiastic mind.

The same delusion of understanding in which these originate, will also most generally display itself in a variety of subordinate effects, and more or less influence the whole *conduct*^c of life—It will not less evidently display itself in the *writings*^d of the enthusiast, by a peculiar turn of thought and style, as

^a This character is shewn in this chapter not to belong to the apostles and evangelists.

^b Chap. ii.

^c Chap. iii.

^d Chap. iv. and v.

well as in the *morality* he inculcates, and the *speculative doctrines* he propounds.

Let us consider the subject in this natural order, and in the *first place* examine *whether the apostles and evangelists believed without sufficient proof*, that their Lord at first, and afterwards themselves, were commissioned and empowered by God to reveal to mankind the gospel scheme.

The great proof on which enthusiasts rely, is the internal perception of "some supernatural light, or some divine impulse, which they assert shews itself too clearly to be mistaken, and needs no other proof but its self-evidence."—Now, though it is almost certain that such a perception may accompany real inspiration, and therefore to affirm that it exists, cannot alone and of necessity be pronounced enthusiastic; yet when no other proof can be given of a supernatural direction, than the asserted existence of such a perception, we must confess it is very suspicious and unsatisfactory.

Experience proves that men are frequently misled by the warmth of imagination and the strength of passions; that they are prone to believe readily what they anxiously wish, and that minds long absorbed in religious contemplation are apt to wish that they

* Chap. vi. † Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, book 4, chap. xix. on enthusiasm, § 8, 9—11.

were so favoured of God, as to have their opinions and actions under the immediate guidance of heaven, and to be endowed with supernatural powers, as the instruments of guiding others to heaven, that they may thus be distinguished from the human race as the oracles and lights of the world. The belief of our being thus inspired, is so flattering to spiritual pride, so grateful to spiritual indolence, and affords so blissful a refuge to minds addicted to religious melancholy, that it cannot be wonderful a warm imagination should readily suggest such a belief, and a weak judgment as readily receive it. Since then a persuasion of our being actuated by divine inspiration may so easily originate in delusion, we must admit that whenever it cannot be vindicated by clear proofs, from the suspicion of having thus originated, even though it may not be demonstrably false, yet it ought not to be received as infallibly true, by any man who will calmly attend to the dictates of reason.

Here then enthusiasm fails^s of evidence, since it can produce no proof of inspiration but internal perception; thus, says a great master of reason, whose principles I have^a adopted,—“He that will
 “ not give himself up to all the extravagancies of
 “ delusion and error, must bring this guide of
 “ his light within to the trial.—When God illuminates the mind with supernatural light, he does

^s Vid. Locke, *ibid.* § 11.

^a Vid. Locke, *ibid.* § 14.

“ not

“ not extinguish that which is natural ; if he would
 “ have us assent to the truth of any proposition,
 “ he either evidences that truth by the usual methods
 “ of natural reason, or else makes it known to be a
 “ truth which he would have us assent to by his au-
 “ thority, and convinces us it is from him, by some
 “ marks which reason cannot be mistaken in.—
 “ Thus, the holy men of old, who had revelations
 “ from God, had something else beside the internal
 “ light of assurance to testify to them that it was from
 “ God ; they had outward signs to convince them
 “ of the author of these revelations.”

It is not therefore difficult to distinguish a just claim
 to divine authority from mere enthusiastic delusion ;
 the latter is founded on internal persuasion alone,
 probably impressed by the visions of a heated ima-
 gination or the presumption of spiritual pride ; it is
 obscure in its origin and utterly defective in its
 proof, since it rarely appeals to any external
 evidence at all, and never to any clear and decisive
 facts ; it claims the submission, but disdains to satisfy
 the doubts of reason. The former, on the contrary,
 establishes itself by adducing decisive proofs of a divine
 interposition ; it relies on miracles, on prophecy, on
 historical facts, which are supported by the testimony
 of sense, and bear the strictest investigation, uniting to
 internal conviction external evidence ; it convinces
 the understanding before it attempts to controul

¹ Locke, *ibid.* § 15.

the will. Its origin is clear, its progress gradual, and its proof satisfactory.

Examine, by this criterion, the faith of the founders of Christianity. It is the peculiar character of enthusiasm not to be conscious of the weakness of those proofs to which it appeals; it therefore employs no disguise to conceal their weakness, but perpetually betrays itself by the very nature of the evidence which it adduces in its support. We may therefore examine the account which the apostles have given of the origin of their faith, secure that if it was founded on the delusion of fanaticism, that delusion will appear in the whole tenor of the gospel history.

SECTION II.

The faith of the apostles in their Lord, at its first origin and progress, was founded not on the delusions of enthusiasm, but on rational proofs.

It is peculiarly important to trace the first origin of any opinion, because this frequently decides its permanent character. When therefore the twelve apostles first followed their divine Master, was it from the power of enthusiastic caprice? Consider

our

our Lord's entrance on his ministry. John was baptizing in the river Jordan, at noon-day, surrounded by multitudes, "from¹ Jerusalem and "all Judea, and all the region round about;" the humble Jesus approaches—for thirty years^m had he lived in retirement—no fameⁿ of private miracles or secret inspirations had been spread abroad, to inflame public expectation or deceive vulgar credulity; he had practised no religious austerity^o to excite veneration; he had collected no partizans to support his authority; he approaches as a young man, alone and undistinguished, modestly desiring to partake of the baptism of John—but undistinguished he did not long remain, the prophet discerned and acknowledged his superior dignity: nor was internal persuasion the only proof of the truth of this acknowledgment—no,—a sensible and awful miracle established the veracity of the prophet, and the dignity of our Lord^p—for "the heavens were opened, and he "saw the Holy Ghost descending like a dove, and "lighting upon him, and lo—a voice from heaven

¹ Matt. iii. 5.

^m Luke, iii. 23.

ⁿ This is put beyond dispute, by the manner in which St. John speaks of the miracle of water turned into wine.—"This "beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee."—John ii.

11.

^o This was the case not only before the commencement, but during the whole course of our Lord's ministry. Vid. Newcome's Observations on our Lord's Conduct, p. 347, on our Lord's temperance. Dublin edit. 1782.

^p Matt. iii. 17.

"saying,

“saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am
“well pleased.”

Thus assured of the divine mission of our Lord,
the Baptist naturally pointed him out to the atten-
tion of his disciples^a. As he stood and looked upon
Jesus, he saith to two of them, “ behold the
Lamb of God,” and they followed Jesus. Thus they
were directed to his acquaintance, but they only abode
with him one day; they afterwards, as was most
natural, brought to him some of their nearest re-
latives and most intimate friends, but it does not
appear that any of them became his permanent fol-
lowers till after many additional opportunities of
listening to the wisdom of his instructions, and
viewing the wonders of his power.—He convinced
Nathaniel that he was the “Son of God, the king
of Israel,” by revealing to him the secret thoughts
of his heart^b.—At Cana of Galilee, by the mira-
cle of water turned into wine; “he manifested forth
“his glory, and his disciples believed in him”. In

^a John i. 35—39. Newcome's Harmony, § 18.

^b John i. 45.

^c John ii. 11. Newcome's Harmony, § 19. This miracle
is fully vindicated from the objections of unbelievers, by Arch-
bishop Newcome, in his view of our Lord's character, p. 2.
ch. 1. § 5.—p. 347. By Bishop Law, in his reflections on the
life and character of Christ, annexed to his theory of religion,
p. 284. note ^{kk}. Also in Stackhouse's history of the bible,
vol. 5. p. 356. Also in the miracles of Jesus vindicated, sup-
posed to be written by Dr. Pierce, bishop of Rochester, 2d edit.
Lond. 1729, part iii. p. 22.

Jerusalem, when the whole nation was assembled to celebrate the passover, our Lord asserted his sacred dignity, and proved it by the stupendous miracles he wrought—"even on the feast day many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did."

To this public manifestation of his power his disciples must surely have been attentive witnesses. Nor were these public miracles the only proofs afforded to those whom he meant to select for his apostles; their gracious Lord condescended to work some particular miracles for their particular conviction and advantage. The supernatural draught of fishes, of which Peter and Andrew, James and John, were the astonished witnesses, prepared them to leave all things that they might follow and obey his sacred call. The sincere faith of Peter was rewarded and confirmed by the miraculous restoration of his mother from the bed of death; and his house was the scene, around which crowds assembled and supplicated the all-powerful interposition of our Saviour's mercy to heal their various diseases, and all received his gracious aid.

* John ii. 23. Newcome's Harmony, § 20, p. 28.

† Mark i. 16—20. Luke v. 1—11. Newcome's Harmony, § 26, p. 38, notes, p. 13.

‡ Matt. viii. 14—17. Mark i. 29—34. Luke iv. 38—41. Newcome's Harmony, § 28, p. 40, notes p. 14.

Thus

Thus the faith of his * followers was originally founded, not on blind credulity, but on rational conviction—not on internal persuasion alone, but on clear and stupendous miracles, proofs submitted to their senses and approved by their reason,

* In stating the facts which it seemed necessary to notice, I have followed the order adopted by Primate Newcome in his *Harmony*, and have with him supposed the ministry of our Lord to have held during three years, or more.—But though I am persuaded of the truth of this hypothesis, I think it expedient to remark, that its truth is no way *essential* to my argument; if we adopt the opinion of Dr. Mann, and Dr. Priestly, that our Lord's ministry terminated in a year and a few months, and follow the order of events which this hypothesis requires; still the main series of facts on which my reasonings are founded remains unchanged.—The apostles had the same causes to attract their attention at first, and strengthen their conviction in every step of its progress; the only difference is that on the latter system the events are united together more closely—they exhibit the same causes, but in somewhat a more rapid succession producing the same effects.—In proof of this I refer my reader to Dr. Priestly's *Harmony*, § 10, on the order of the events—and the calendar of our Saviour's ministry annexed to the harmony—he makes a greater number of miracles precede the selection of the twelve, but fewer intervene between that selection and their first mission.

† Newcome's Preface to his *Harmony*, p. 5. “Previously to the call of the four apostles, Mark i. 16—28. Andrew had been the Baptists disciple, and had received his testimony to Jesus (probably also St. John, according to the best commentators on John i. 35) Peter had been brought to Jesus by Andrew, his brother, and Jesus had shewn more than human knowledge, and more than human power, which probably had fallen within the experience of these disciples, or, at least, must have gained their belief on the firmest grounds.”

which

which enthusiasm could not have counterfeited, and never would have required; and at every step of its progress, as their faith was called to signalize itself by new exertions, or to sustain new trials, it was fortified by new proofs,

During a considerable period, (probably a whole year) had his disciples been hearers of his doctrines, and witnesses of his power, before he selected from them twelve, to become his ministers and apostles. Immediately, on this selection, he descends with them into the plain, and heals multitudes in their presence. A considerable interval, filled with the most * awful miracles, intervened between this call,

* Vid. Newcome's Preface to his Harmony, p. 5. "The jealousy of the Jewish rulers was not early awakened by the call of the twelve apostles to a stated attendance. This event took place after our Lord had celebrated his second passover at Jerusalem, when he was about to absent himself from that city for so long an interval as eighteen months; in like manner the seventy were not sent forth, to shew, throughout a wide tract of country, with what wisdom and power their Master endued them till within about six months of our Lord's crucifixion."—Vid. also the notes on section 33, of Newcome's Harmony, p. 16. Matt. x. 2—4. Mark iii. 13—19. Luke vi. 12—19.

* Between the selection of the twelve and their first mission, amongst many other miracles were the following distinguished ones—the servant of the Centurion at Capernaum, Matt. viii. Luke vii.—Newcome's Harmony, § 37, p. 63. the widows' son at Nain is raised from the dead, Luke vii. 11.—Newcome's Harmony, § 38, a tempest is calmed by a word, Matt. viii. 23—26. Luke viii. 22.—Newcome's Harmony, § 50, and the daughter of Jairus is raised to life, Matt. ix. 18. Mark v. 22. Luke vii. 41. Newcome's Harmony, § 52.

and

and his delegation of them to visit the cities of Judah, that they might teach and work miracles themselves.—And in that mission they received such new and signal proofs of divine assistance, that any attempt to account for them by the delusions of enthusiasm is the extreme of absurdity. “They departed and “went through the towns and healed every where.” After another long interval seventy disciples, with similar power, were sent forth, and with equal success; “they returned with joy”, recounting the wonders they had wrought.

SECTION III.

Some circumstances which have afforded pretexts for imputing our Lord's miracles to the force of enthusiasm, considered and explained.

IT may be necessary here to remark, that the series of miracles which our blessed Lord performed, was decidedly above every possibility of being accounted for by any enthusiastic delusions, or any force of imagination in the persons on whom these miracles were wrought. A suspicion, which has been sometimes raised, from our Lord's appearing to require faith in those who were healed, and from its

* Vid. Christianity not founded on argument, p. 49.

** Luke x. 17.

being recorded, that he could not, or would not, work many mighty works at Nazareth, because of their unbelief. But even in those cases which have given occasion to this suspicion, from our Lord's requiring faith before he conferred his miraculous favours, one observation which has not been, I think, sufficiently attended to, seems to me to prove to a certainty, that it was not because the success of the miracle, in any degree, depended on this faith; we uniformly find that our Lord required faith, only in the person *at whose request the miracle was vouchsafed*, not at all in the patient on whom it was wrought, except he applied in person for the cure. —Thus, when ^b the nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, applied to our Saviour at Cana of Galilee, “to come down and heal him, for he *“ was at the point of death.”* Our Lord answers him, “*except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe; but go thy way, thy son liveth; and the man believed and went his way.*” —Now, could the force of imagination in the father heal the absent son?

Thus also, when the ^c Centurion at Capernaum sent the elders of the Jews to beseech him “to heal *“ his servant, who was very dear to him, who was sick and ready to die,”*—and proved the greatness

^b John iv. 43—54. Newcome's Harmony, § 24.

^c Matt. viii. 5.—13. Luke vii. 1.—10. Newcome's Harmony, § 37.

of his faith by declaring, "*Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof, but say the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*" Our Lord declares, "he had not found so great faith, no not in Israel;" and adds, "go thy way, and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."—Here, could the faith of the master contribute to the cure of the servant, except only as being the motive of our Lord's prompt interference? Thus the faith of the person on whose application the miracle is wrought (whether the patient himself or another) is the cause of the cure, no otherwise than as it was the cause, first of the application, and next of our Lord's complying with it; but though this faith must have preceded that particular miracle, does it therefore follow that it was not founded on any observation of our Lord's divine power, but that it must have been derived from irrational credulity and blind enthusiasm? Surely not.—In every instance, when we find such faith required, it is plain from the history, that the person of whom it was required, must have had opportunities of being fully assured of our Lord's supernatural power, and gracious mercy in exerting it.—When men improved these opportunities with serious attention, when they judged from what they saw and heard with fairness and candour, they could not fail of receiving a full conviction of our Lord's divine character; and if in consequence of this conviction they applied to him with seriousness and humility,

lity, he never refused to lend a pitying ear, and extend a saving arm: thus he rewarded the sincere believer, while he displayed a proof of his power to the unconverted.

But men frequently acted in a manner totally the reverse of this; they neglected or perverted the fullest opportunities of conviction—like the ‘Pharisees, they attributed the plainest manifestations of divine benevolence to the influence of malignant demons—or applied to see a ‘sign; not because they had not already seen abundant wonders, but because they resolved not to be satisfied with any evidence, except such as they pre-conceived would mark out that temporal deliverer, whom alone their worldly minds expected or desired; an expectation in which when they found themselves disappointed by the meek Jesus; they received his virtues with hatred, and were irritated almost to madness by his miracles. Some, like ‘Herod, only hoped to see a miracle performed, from idle curiosity, without any desire for information or conviction, but rather with a fixed aversion to the purity and benevolence of that system which the Son of God laboured to inculcate and exemplify.—Others, like the ‘Nazarites, beheld his mighty works, and heard

^d Matt. xii. 22.—37. Newcome’s Harmony, § 42.

^e Matt. 12.—38.

^f Luke xxiii. 6.—12.

^g Luke iv. 15.—31. Newcome’s Harmony, § 25. Again, Matt. xiii. 54.—58. Newcome’s Harmony, § 55.

his wise instructions, not with reverence but with indignation, because their proud and worldly minds were offended with the apparent meanness of his origin, in consequence of which, they would not condescend to apply to our Lord for his interference, notwithstanding his long experienced power.—In all these cases the Son of God *would not* gratify the vain and unreasonable expectations of some, or waste his miracles on others, who despised both him and them, for he *could not* do this consistently with the dignity of his office, and the object of his mission, which was calculated to try and to exalt the moral character of men, by supplying abundant evidence to the fair and humble enquirer; without ^h extorting the assent of the wilfully blind and obstinately negligent, or violently subduing to a reluctant submission the incorrigibly vicious and perverse.

Thus it was that the want of faith prevented our Lord from dispensing his miraculous favours; but never did the benign Jesus, when implored, refuse to exercise his supernatural power in relieving misery; and in no instance did he ever attempt to exercise it without full success; while in the objects and the manner of the operation he constantly displayed a just selection and calm dignity, utterly inconsistent with the extravagance of fanaticism.

^h Vid. John iii. 1—21. Also v. 41, and especially John viii. 17. Also Luke viii. 4—18.

Our Lord's sometimes appearing to conceal his miracles, has also induced a suspicion that they could not stand the test of rational enquiry ; but it is easy to account for this circumstance, so as totally to repel the suspicion. It cannot surely be denied, that our Lord exhibited multiplied proofs of his divine mission even to his enemies, from whom however he was obliged frequently to shade the full splendor of these proofs, and to avoid disclosing the full extent of those objects which he came to accomplish, and the high majesty of that character which he was entitled to assume, because thus only could he secure the credibility, the reputation, and the success, of that religion which he laboured to establish. In order to secure these infinitely important objects, it was necessary " that he should ¹ compleat the time foretold " of his ministry, and after a life illustrious in miracles and good works, attended with humility, " meekness, patience and sufferings, and every way " conformable to the prophecies of him, should be " led as a sheep to the slaughter, and with all quiet " and submission should be brought to the cross, " though there were no guilt or fault in him : this " could not have been, if as soon as he appeared in " public, and began to preach, he had presently " professed himself to have been the Messiah, the " king who owned that kingdom he published to be

¹ Vid. Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity. Watson's Tracts, vol. iv. p. 23.

“at hand, for the Sanhedrim would have then taken
 “hold on it to have got him in their power, and
 “thereby have taken away his life—at least they
 “would have disturbed his ministry, and hindered
 “the work he was about”—^k obliging him perhaps
 to submit prematurely to their violence, or to use
 such supernatural methods of escape or resistance;
 and to inflict such supernatural punishments, as
 would be inconsistent with the humble, merciful,
 and unresisting character which it became him to
 support, and such as might prevent those final suf-
 ferings it was necessary he should undergo.

Another purpose equally important to which this
 reserve was necessary, was, that he “should not be
 “seized for any thing that might make him a crim-
 “inal to the government, and therefore he avoided
 “giving those, who, in the division that was about
 “him, inclined towards him, occasion of tumult for
 “his sake; or to the Jews, his enemies, matter of
 “just accusation out of his own mouth, by profes-
 “sing himself to be the Messiah, the king of Israel,
 “in direct words.”—Hence also he was obliged fre-
 quently to conceal his miracles, which would have
 roused the impetuous multitude, full of their ideas
 of a temporal Messiah, to repeat their efforts, to
 “take him by force and make him a king”—^l

^k Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity. Watson's Tracts,
 vol. iv. p. 58. ^l Locke, *ibid* p. 47. ^m John vi. 15.

event, which had it taken place, and been with any shadow of reason chargeable on our Lord's conduct, would have totally defeated the sacred purpose of his mission, since he would thus have appeared to have been justly punished for abusing religion to gratify ambition, instead of appearing the founder of a religion whose scheme was totally free from every mixture of temporal and narrow views, and every way worthy of the Son of God.

Had our Lord been impelled by the violence of enthusiasm, it is not conceivable that such would not have been his fate; but the consummate prudence which regulated his every action, enabled him to steer his way through all the dangers that surrounded him.—In conformity to such prudence it was, that he so often commanded those on whom he wrought his miracles—"Go, and tell no man who has made thee whole;" but his apostles he was ever careful should be eye witnesses of all his wondrous works, and constant hearers of his words; to them he explained every difficulty, and condescended gradually to enlighten their understandings and dispel their prejudices.—A select number of them attended his most private miracles—they beheld the awful anticipation of his divine glory at the ¹transfiguration on the mount, which they were commanded not to declare till after his resurrection, because then only

Matt. xvii. Luke ix. Mark ix.

they

they could declare it without any danger of being understood to describe a temporal Messiah.—Thus even the concealment of our Lord's divine works, which in some instances took place, so far from justifying any suspicion of their being founded on fanatic delusion, clearly shews they were under the direction of the most perfect wisdom, and performed, as well as related, with every mark of soberness.

SECTION IV.

The nature of the miracles wrought by our Lord during his public ministry, and the circumstances which attended them, prove they cannot be ascribed to the power of enthusiasm.

THE least attention to the evangelic history will satisfy us, that the subjects of our Lord's miracles were most generally such as no power of imagination, no delusion of enthusiasm, could possibly influence. ° To turn water into wine—^p to feed 5000 persons at one time on five loaves and two fishes, and ^q 4000 at another, on seven loaves and a few small fishes—^r to restore a withered limb—to give sight to a man ^s forty years old, who had been *born blind*—

° John ii. 1—12.

^q Matt. xv. 32—38.

^r John ix.

^p Luke ix. 14. John vi. 10.

^s Matt. xii. 9. Luke vi. 6—11.

to raise from the dead a carcase that was 'carrying out to the grave; and " another that had lain four days in the tomb; in these and a variety of other miracles which our Saviour wrought, no force of imagination could have the smallest influence. In truth, nothing can be more repugnant to reason or experience, than the supposition that our Lord's miracles were the effects of any force of imagination, or enthusiastic impulse; or that if any delusion had taken place with regard to them, it would not have been immediately detected and exposed. In proof of this let us briefly consider their infinite variety, and their uniform success—the public manner in which they were performed—their being frequently wrought in the presence of his most inveterate enemies, and attended with circumstances which attracted the immediate attention of these enemies, and excited the severest scrutiny. These circumstances do not vindicate them more clearly from all suspicion of having been produced by the artifices of fraud, than from all possibility of being accounted for by enthusiasm.

The impulse of fanaticism will produce its effects irregularly, uncertainly, and imperfectly, according to the different nature of the disease, the force of imagination in the diseased, the temperature of the constitution, and a variety of other circumstances; and these effects will be often as tran-

¹ Luke vii. 11—17.

² John xi. 1—54.

fitory as the power that produces them is variable. Not such were the effects of that truly divine power possessed by our Lord ; which operated uniformly and equally on every disease, on multitudes of different tempers, ages, habits, religions, so as never once to fail ; and this at the first application, compleatly and permanently, so that no one complained of a relapse, or of having been imperfectly healed. Nothing is more clear in the gospel history than this, the evangelists relate confidently that our Lord healed multitudes at * Capernaum, at the * sea of Galilee, afterwards in the plain, through all the cities and villages of Galilee ; at Gennethareth, even in the ' temple at Jerusalem on the sabbath-day, shortly before his crucifixion. In all these places were brought unto him *all who lay sick of divers diseases*, the “ blind, the dumb, the lame, sick persons borne in beds, ” those that had the palsy, demoniacs, lunatics, *and he healed them all—every one, as many as touched him were made whole.*”

Of these miracles multitudes were witnesses, who attended him from place to place ; sometimes crowding the houses where he was, so that there was “ *no room, no, not so much as about the door ;*”

* Luke iv. 40. v. 17—26. vi. 12—19. viii. 1. Matt. iv. 23—25. ix. 34. xi. 4. xiv. 35. Newcome's Harmony, § 28, 29, 30—34, 35, 32—68.

' Matt. xxi. 14.

² Matt. iv. 23. John xii. 37.

* Vid. Appendix.

thronging

thronging round him in the streets, following him to the sea; to the most retired and uninhabited parts of the country, the mountains, the desert—staying with him near “^a three days together; so that he and “^b his disciples had not leisure scarcely even to eat”—and these multitudes came from various and distant places; for great multitudes, say the evangelists, “^c followed him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from “^d Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan, from Idumea, and they of Tyre and Sidon, “^e and his fame went throughout all Syria, and they “^f brought unto him all sick people, and from all “^g the region round about Genesareth.—And what is most important to observe, amongst these witnesses of our Saviour’s miracles, we often find his most inveterate enemies, the priests and scribes, the Pharisees and Sadducees, who very early conceived a rooted aversion to the humble and pure Jesus, and watched the progress of his ministry with a jealousy which raged with still encreasing fury, till it glutted itself with his blood.

These enemies always attended the synagogues where he frequently wrought his miracles; they often also mixed with the multitude, and watched to detect any thing censurable in his conduct.—Did he assume the character of the Son of God, and the power of forgiving sins, they were ready to accuse him of

^a Matt xv. 32. 1b. xiv. 13. ^b Matt. iv. 25. Mark iii. 8. Luke iv. 38—44 and 5. 1—17. John vi. 2.

blasphemy.

blasphemy.—Did he eat bread with unwashed hands, in opposition to their traditions, they were filled with indignation.—Did he neglect to imitate their hypocritical austerity in fastings—and did he associate with the humble and penitent converts, they reproached him with being a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.—Did he restore health and vigor to the diseased, even these works of mercy, if performed on the sabbath, they condemned as impious violations of that sacred day.

Such were the men who watched to entangle him in his talk, who laboured to ensnare him with insidious questions, in order to discover something that might give room for accusing him to the Roman governor; yet to these vigilant and subtle enemies did our Lord, at the moment he was about to perform many of his miracles, or after he had performed them, fearlessly appeal in vindication of his own character, and to expose their obstinate perverseness and malignity.—Instances of this are frequent.

At ^c Capernaum, as he was teaching, there were *Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee and Judea, and Jerusalem*—a paralytic man was let down through the roof, with his couch, in the midst before Jesus, and

^c Luke v. 17—26. Mark ii. 1—12. Matt. ix. 2—8. Newcome's Harmony, § 30.

when

when he saw their faith, (the faith of the persons who brought him, as well as of the man himself) he said unto him, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" but when certain of the scribes and Pharisees "reasoned in their hearts, saying, who is this that thus speaketh blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God alone?" Our Lord immediately exposes their perverse malignity, "why think ye evil in your heart, but that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith unto the sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house, and immediately he arose, took up the bed whereon he lay, and went out before them all glorifying God."

^d Thus again, on the sabbath-day, in a synagogue of Galilee, as he taught, there was a man with a withered hand; "and the scribes and Pharisees watched whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; and he reasoned with them, and asked them, is it lawful on the sabbath-day to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it? but they held their peace; and when he looked round about him with anger, at the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man—stretch forth thine hand, and he stretched it out, *and his hand was restored whole as the other,* and they were filled with madness, and took council how they might destroy him.

^d Matt. xii. 9—21. Mark iii. 1—12. Luke vi. 6—11.

Thus also the cure of the man who had been born ^e blind, underwent an immediate and severe scrutiny by the enemies of our Lord. The Pharisees examine first the man himself, then his parents—then again the man, and when he persevered in proving, that the miracle was wrought by Jesus, and honestly avowed the conclusion which his reason dictated; “*that if this man were not of God he could do nothing,*” they reply with the wounded pride of bigotry—“*thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us;*” and like all bigots, who will silence by punishment those whom they cannot confute by reason, they excommunicate this honest and grateful witness of the power and mercy of Christ: yet our Lord meets him soon after in the presence of some of the Pharisees, recalls the miracle to their recollection, avows his character as the Son of God, and reproaches them with their obstinate blindness.

Still more remarkable is the account which the evangelists, with almost unequalled impartiality and humility, deliver of the apostles attempting to cure a child who was possessed with a dumb spirit, lunatick and sore vexed, and *their having failed in the*

^e John ix. 1—34. I earnestly recommend this passage to the attention of my young readers. The striking simplicity of the narrative, the natural conduct of all the parties, and the strict scrutiny the miracle sustained, cannot fail of making a deep impression on every candid mind. Vid further particulars in the Appendix.

attempt;

attempt ;—the scribes, ever vigilant to discredit their mission, instantly appear active and curious, questioning them in the presence of the multitude. Our Lord approaches, asks the scribes “ what question ye with them ”—discovers the cause, and instantly, in the presence of the same multitude, and the same watchful enemies, compleatly cures the child.

What circumstances could display more strongly the strict scrutiny to which our Lord’s miracles were exposed from his enemies, and the fearlessness with which he submitted them to that scrutiny ?

Thus also many of the Jews, who were witnesses of that great and awful miracle the ³ resurrection of Lazarus, were plainly *enemies*, for immediately they inform the Pharisees, who call a council with the chief priests ; and said, “ what do we, for this man “ doeth many miracles ? if we thus let him alone all “ men will believe in him ; and the Romans will “ come and take away both our place and nation.” Thus their alarm at the apprehended destruction of their church and state, counteracted the effect of an acknowledged supernatural interposition ; and conceiving themselves justified by the expediency of

³ Matt. xvii. 14. Mark ix. 14. Luke ix. 37.

⁴ John xi. Why this miracle is mentioned only by St. John, see admirably well accounted for in Lardner’s Vindication of it, vol. 2, p. 11 to 28, edit. of 1788.

committing a private crime, for a supposed public good ; the expediency “ *that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not ;*” they from that moment took counsel to put to death Jesus, the teacher of righteousness and dispenser of mercy.

From all these instances I conclude with confidence, that our Lord’s miracles were totally independent of any enthusiastic delusion. Experience proves, that such delusions seldom last longer than while they meet with minds all equally and fitly disposed to catch the impulse, as it passes, like an electric shock from soul to soul ; but when numbers are constantly found to resist and repel, instead of yielding to and forwarding this influence, its progress meets a speedy check, and the delusion fails. Hence it is, that enthusiasts can bear as little as impostors, the presence and the inspection even of cold and neutral spectators ; much less of jealous scrutinizing enemies. Not so our Lord, he perpetually appealed to the sober reason even of his most obstinate enemies, to judge from plain facts, and acknowledged truths, of his right to the divine authority he assumed, and the validity of the proofs on which he rested his claims. His addresses on this subject are numerous and striking, and so important to our present purpose, that I cannot pass them by.

“ As

“ As Jesus walked in the temple, came the Jews
 “ round about him, and said unto him, how long
 “ dost thou make us to doubt ? If thou be the Christ
 “ tell us plainly. And Jesus answered, I told you,
 “ and you believed me not : *the works that I do in*
 “ *my Father's name they bear witness of me* ^c. And
 “ again, if I do not the works of my Father, believe me
 “ not ; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe
 “ *the works*, that ye may know and believe that the
 “ Father is in me, and I in him.”

When John ^b sent his disciples to ask Jesus, art
 thou he that should come ; or do we look for ano-
 ther ? How directly does our Lord appeal to the
 miracles which he was at that moment performing—
 “ Go and shew John again those things which you do see
 “ and hear, the blind receive their sight, and the lame
 “ walk ; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear ;
 “ the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel
 “ preached to them ; and blessed is he who shall not
 “ be offended in me.” Immediately after, he upbraids
 the cities in which his mighty works were wrought,
 because they repented not ; and states their wilful and
 obstinate neglect of such proofs as the highest aggrava-
 tion of their guilt. Finally, how fully and calmly
 does he appeal to the various proofs of his divine
 mission, in order to expose and overturn the ob-

^c John x. 23, 24, and 36, 37.

^b Matt. xi. 2—29. Luke vii. 18—35.

¹ Matt. xi. 20—30.

stinate perverseness of the Jews, who sought to kill him, because he healed on the sabbath, and assumed the character of the Son of God. “** If I bear witness of myself my witness is not true—there is another that beareth witness of me, and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true; ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.*” And this strong appeal to prophetic testimony “*Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me: had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*” Such were the proofs by which our Lord’s disciples were convinced of his divine authority. How different from the visions of enthusiasm, which appeal to no credentials but the impulse of secret inspiration, and rest on no support but blind credulity.

** John v. 18, to the end*

SECTION V.

The apostles' belief in their Lord's resurrection, and in the subsequent manifestations of his divine power, was not imputable to enthusiasm.

IF during the life time of their Lord the apostles received such evidence of his divine authority as no enthusiasm could supply, such evidence as approves itself to our reason, and abundantly accounts for their ready obedience to their Master's call, and their adherence to his person, even unto death, much more did they receive clear and undeniable proofs of his resurrection from the dead.

If indeed we contemplate their situation and conduct at this important crisis, it will appear, that enthusiasm must have been wholly excluded from their minds. Suppose for a moment, that by some unaccountable means, they had been worked up into an enthusiastic belief of miracles they had never seen, and of divine perfections, which existed only in their fond imaginations, how utterly impossible that such a delusion should have survived their crucified Lord. They had, as they¹ confess, followed him as a tem-

¹ Matt. xvi. 21. to the end. Mark ix. 33—37. Matt. xx. 19. xxviii. compare Mark x. 35—45. Luke xxiv. 34.

poral Messiah, who would prove by miracles his claim to the throne of David, who would be received by the assembled thousands of Israel, rescue them from the Roman yoke, and subjugate to their power the remotest nations of the earth. But the event exhibited the total reverse of this ; their Master seized, bound, accused, declaring "*his kingdom was not of this world,*" and submitting, without reply or resistance, to insult and outrage ; they saw him persecuted by the priests and rulers ; they heard the populace clamour for his condemnation, till the Roman governor pronounced his ignominious doom ; and they beheld him expire on the cross, dying the death of the accursed, and lodged in the depths of the grave. Every fond hope seemed to be thus for ever blasted, every ambitious thought was crushed, every prejudice of their religion, their education, outraged.

Alas ! what delusion could have withstood such a shock as this ? what credulity could have longer blinded ? what enthusiasm could have longer possessed them ? how disappointed, how dejected, how alarm-

Even after his resurrection, they resumed for some time the same ideas of his kingdom, as appears from their question to him, Acts i. 6. " Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the "*kingdom to Israel ?*" So ill prepared were they for the spiritual and enlarged scheme of the gospel, till enlightened and directed by the miraculous effusion of the holy Spirit.

ed, must the coolest and the steadiest minds have been at such a scene? and much more enflamed enthusiasts, with whom the bitterness of disappointment is ever proportioned to the extravagance of expectation, how unwilling must they be to resume a hope, which had thus deplorably deceived them? how slow to re-embark in a cause, thus plainly desperate? Such must have been the necessary tenor of their minds^m. And exactly conformable to this is the artless description which the evangelists record, of the feelings and conduct of their brethren. When the two disciples relate the crucifixion of their Lord, how full of perplexity and despondence is their narrativeⁿ. "*But we, said they, trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*".—When assembled together, it was with the^o *doors shut for fear of the Jews*.—But this state of doubt and dismay was soon changed to triumphant faith, and these very men became witnesses of the resurrection of their crucified Lord.

By what means was this wondrous change achieved? here it is the question principally rests. Was their faith in this great article the impulse of enthu-

^m Vid. this point very well illustrated by Dr. Archibald Campbell, in his discourse, to prove the apostles were not enthusiasts, from p. 47 to 70.

ⁿ Luke xxiv. 21.

^o John xi. 19.

fiasm, or founded on the certainty of truth? Let us attend to the progress of this change.

Was it enthusiasm which moved them to reject the evidence of those women, who had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive^p, and who afterwards spoke to him in person^q? Two of the apostles discovered, that the body was missing, but as yet they "*knew not the scripture, that he must rise from the dead;*" they retired wondering, not believing^r.

Could enthusiasm have deceived them into a belief, that a dead body no longer occupied the sepulchre in which they had seen it lodged, and which they deliberately and minutely examined? how utterly impossible! "He appeared to two separately, but neither believed they them." Was this extreme slowness of faith a mark of enthusiasm? the very reverse; it proves, that their minds were utterly void of every hope which might delude, and on their guard against every artifice that might deceive them.

But was it enthusiasm, to admit the evidence of their senses, when they repeatedly saw, and felt, and

^p Luke xxiv. 1—11. ^q Mark xvi. 11. ^r John xx. 1—19. Luke xxiv. 12. Mark xvi. 12.

^s Paley's Evidences, p. 485, Dublin edition.—"The presence and the absence of the dead body, are alike inconsistent with the hypothesis of enthusiasm; for if present, it must have cured their enthusiasm at once; if absent, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have carried it away."

spoke to their Lord restored to life, when he “eat
 “and drank before them,” when he invited them—
 “behold my hands and my feet that it is, I myself;
 “handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and
 “bones, as ye see me have”—when he called unto
 Thomas, who declared, except “I shall “see in his
 “hands, the print of the nails, and thrust my hand
 “into his side, I will not believe.” When even this
 proof was granted him, and extorted from the ob-
 stinacy of his scepticism, the exclamation of “my
 “Lord, and my God!” When he performed mira-
 racles in their presence—when “for forty days toge-
 “ther he frequently conversed with them, expound-
 “ing the things which belong to the kingdom of God;”
 and finally, in the sight of all his apostles, ascended
 into “heaven, there to remain at the right hand of
 the Majesty on ‘high.

Was it enthusiasm to admit such evidence as this,
 which nothing but blindness or frenzy could reject?
 —yet the proofs they received did not cease here;
 forty days after they received the Spirit of God,
 descending with sensible signs, and resting upon
 them.—“They were all with one accord in one
 “place, and suddenly there came a sound, as of a
 “rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house
 “where they were sitting, and there appeared to
 “them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat
 “upon each of them, and they were all filled with

‘ Luke xxiv. 36—43. “ John xx. 24, 25. * Acts i. 3.

* Luke xxiv. 51. Acts i. 6.

“ the Holy Ghost, and began to speak in other
 “ tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”—Now
 surely this communication of the Spirit of God, con-
 nected with the facts and the promises which prepar-
 ed the apostles for its reception, and with the effects
 which testified its reality, stands on the clearest
 ground of certainty.

Could enthusiasm persuade them to believe that they
 had suddenly acquired the knowledge of languages,
 which they had never learned? that they possessed
 the gift of healing, and exercised it upon multitudes?
 Still further, could enthusiasm persuade them, that by
 “ prayer and laying on of hands” God enabled them
 to obtain for ^a others, a portion of that supernatural
 knowledge and power which they themselves possessed;
 and all this not for a short time, but for the whole re-
 maining period of their lives?—how wholly incredible
 that in this they could be mistaken.

In ^a truth we must *admit* the testimony of the apostles
 to *all* the facts they relate, or *deny it in all*—all were in-
 separably connected—all equally submitted to the ex-
 amination of their senses, with this difference, that
 the miracles which determined them to maintain the
 divine authority of their crucified Lord, must have ex-
 cited their attention more strongly than any other parts
 of his life, because in these they were most interested

^a Acts viii. 14 to 17. xix. 6.
 Discourse, p. 45.

^a Vid. Campbell's

not to be misled; since error here involved them in the extremest persecution and distress. Can we then believe they were enthusiasts in asserting the miracles, the resurrection, the ascension of their Lord, when they were as fully judges of these events, and had the very same opportunities of observing them, as his life, his actions, and his death?

What enthusiasm could so compleatly blind and subvert, not merely the reason, but every faculty, and every sense, of such a number of men, for such a length of time, that they should imagine that multitudes of diseased persons were instantaneously restored to health, who never were restored; that the lame were made to walk, the dumb to speak, the blind to see, and even the dead to rise to life; nay, imagine not only that all this was done, but that they were themselves the persons at whose word, and by whose agency these things were done.

To believe that any degree of enthusiasm could delude men to fancy these things for a series of days, and months and years, in the most public towns and places, surrounded by crowds of friends and enemies—to believe this is surely the enthusiasm of credulity—utterly inconsistent with all truth and soberness of mind.

On this part of the argument it is, I trust, evinced that the apostles were *at first* attached to their Lord, not by the blind impulse of enthusiasm, but the strong attraction of reason and evidence. That they every day were more firmly united to him by perpetually accumulated proofs of his stupendous power; and that they finally were conscious of becoming themselves the agents, by whom he dispensed his mercies to mankind. When therefore they were commanded by the high priests not to "speak at all, or preach in the name of Jesus"—well did they reply, not with the heat of enthusiasm, but the calm steadiness of conscious truth.—"*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye; we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*"

described as perpetually distinguished by a calm and essential character;—the probability of believing without any, or at least without sufficient evidence, that a man's own mind is enlightened by divine inspiration;—the absurd presumption of demanding the submission of others to the dictates of this supposed divine authority, without exhibiting any clear or satisfactory proofs of its reality.

That the apostles and evangelists were free from the taint of such character, I endeavored to establish, by enumerating those striking proofs of divine wisdom and power exhibited by their Lord, which induced his disciples to attend his instructions, and by testifying his sacred mission; and by testifying

CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

Containing arguments to prove that the apostles were not enthusiasts, from their not requiring faith in others without supplying sufficient evidence to justify it.

SECTION I.

The apostles converted men not by enthusiastic delusions, but by working public and indisputable MIRACLES.

IN the first chapter religious enthusiasm has been described as perpetually discernable by two primary and essential characters ;—the 1st. credulity in believing without any, or at least without sufficient evidence, that a man's own mind is enlightened by divine inspiration ;—the 2d. presumptuous dogmatism in demanding the submission of others to the dictates of this supposed divine authority, without exhibiting any clear or satisfactory proofs of its reality.

That the apostles and evangelists were free from the first of these characters, I endeavoured to establish, by enumerating those striking proofs of divine wisdom and power exhibited by their Lord, which first induced his disciples to attend his instructions, and acknowledge his sacred mission ; and by stating the

the evidence addressed to their senses and their reason, which supplied such a firm conviction of his resurrection and ascension, that they devoted their lives to the promulgation of his gospel, and did not hesitate to die as martyrs to its truth.

The very charge of enthusiasm implies sincerity; and such sacrifices as the apostles submitted to, infallibly prove they were sincere; admitting therefore that they believed the facts which they attest, the only question as to the source of their own conviction is, whether as to these facts they could have been deceived by any enthusiastic delusion? and that this was impossible, I trust, has been evinced.

Let me now pass to the *second* character of enthusiasm, that of *demanding assent on insufficient evidence*. In ascribing this character to it, I am confirmed by the authority of the same profound reasoner on the habits of the human mind, whom I have before quoted. Speaking of enthusiasm he observes, that “the assuming an authority of dictating to others, and a forwardness to prescribe to their opinions, is a constant concomitant of this bias of our judgments; for how can it be otherwise but that he should be ready to impose on other men’s belief, who has already imposed upon his own?”—Here again he distinguishes between the delusions of

^b Lock on enthusiasm, § 2.

enthusiasm, and the clear evidence of divine revelation. "The holy men of old," says he, "who were
 "sent to convince others, had a power given them to
 "justify the truth of their commission, and by visi-
 "ble signs to assert their divine authority."

On this ground the first teachers of the gospel stand far removed from every suspicion of enthusiasm.—Never did they claim assent merely on an unsupported assertion of being actuated by divine inspiration—of having been driven by a sudden and irresistible impulse—of having seen a divine light infused into their souls, needing no evidence but its own brightness. They did not appeal to obscure and doubtful proofs, such as agitations of mind, or convulsions of body, visions by night, or secret whispers by day. No, they claimed the assent of mankind to doctrines established by facts—facts which were themselves miraculous, and direct proofs of a supernatural interference; or which exhibited the accomplishment of prophecies, and thus evinced that divine Providence had introduced the scheme of which they formed a part.—Of these facts they had been themselves eye-witnesses, but they had not been the only witnesses; frequently the events were most public and undeniable.—The resurrection of our Lord, his subsequent converse upon earth, and ascent into Heaven, with the descent of the holy Spirit on the apostles, seem to have been the *only* leading facts, of which numbers,

* Lock. ib. § 15.

besides Christians, had not been witnesses. Yet even these could not be termed *private* transactions ; *five hundred persons* had seen our Lord at once, of whom, says St. Paul, addressing the ^d Corinthians, “ the greater part remain unto this present.”—And instantly on the descent of the Spirit, the apostles appeared in public ; “ “ and when it was noised abroad the multitude came together, for there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven, Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judea, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, strangers of Rome, Jews and Profelytes, Cretes and Arabians, who were all amazed hearing them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God.”—Three thousand persons on one day added to the church, proved the certainty of the miraculous power which convinced their reason and established their faith.

10 If a calm and steady appeal to plain and public events is such a proof of truth and soberness, as enthusiasm never can produce, that proof the evangelists supplied.—Hear the language in which Peter addressed the assembled populace of Jerusalem :—“ Ye men of Israel hear these words—Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as YE YOURSELVES ALSO KNOW : him

^d 1. Corinth. xv. 6.

^e Acts ii. 1 to 13.

being

“ being delivered by the determinate counsel and
 “ foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with
 “ wicked hands have crucified and slain; this Jesus
 “ hath God raised from the dead, whereof WE ALL
 “ ARE WITNESSES ”. Exactly the same is their
 language before the Jewish people, again collect-
 ed by the “ fame of a new miracle,—^b before the
 priests and elders, the rulers and scribes, assembled
 in council, to try and punish them,—^c before Cor-
 nelius, a Roman Centurion, who dwelt at Cæsarea,
 not many miles distant from Jerusalem, who had called
 together his kinsmen and near friends, to receive the
 glad tidings of the gospel. In every place, and before
 every audience, they repeat this language; and sure-
 ly this is the language of manly reason and conscious
 truth, not of folly and fanaticism.

Yet convincing and rational as was the appeal to
 past facts, it was not the only evidence from which
 the apostles claimed the assent of mankind to the
 gospel.—They had been chosen as peculiar witnesses of
 the resurrection of their Lord; the credit of this
 fact therefore must have rested solely on their own
 veracity; and in distant countries the whole series of
 facts appealed to, must have been unknown. Now,
 though they undoubtedly established their veracity
 upon the firmest ground, by teaching a doctrine of
 piety and purity, and submitting to distress and dan-

^a Acts ii. 22—24 and 32. ^b Acts iii. 13—18.

^c Acts iv. 1—12.

^d Acts x. 36—43.

ger of the severest kind in its support; yet they were frequently enabled to evince their truth, and divine mission, by proofs more striking than any past transaction however notorious; by present miracles; by a direct appeal to the senses of their hearers.

They appealed to the effusions of the holy Spirit, proved at the moment by the miraculous gift of tongues—"God, says the apostle, has shewed forth that which ye now see and hear;" they appealed to the man at that moment healed, whom all the people knew "to be the same who had been daily laid at the gate of the temple, to seek for alms, having been lame from his mother's womb; but whom they now, full of wonder and amazement, saw walking and leaping, and praising God."

When Peter by a word restored to instant health, *Eneas, who for eight years had been confined to his bed*—"all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, who turned to the Lord."—Not less public was his raising Dorcas from death^m, "*which was known throughout all Joppa, so that many believed in the Lord.*"

When at ⁿ Lystra, Paul with supernatural power, commanded one who had been a cripple from his birth, to rise and stand; and perfect strength was

^k Acts iii. 1—16.
from 36 to the end.

^l Acts ix. 32—35.

ⁿ Acts xiv. from 8—18.

^m Acts ix.

instantly

instantly bestowed on him. So public and signal was the act, that the multitude of spectators exclaimed, the "Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men," and scarcely were restrained from offering to them sacrifices as to Gods.

But these particular instances are but a few, incidentally recorded, from a multitude, wrought by different apostles in different countries, and for considerable periods of time. By all the apostles at Jerusalem *"were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, so that there came a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one."*

At Samaria, where Philip spread the gospel, *"and the people with one accord gave heed to these things which he spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."*

At Ephesus, by Paul, for a period of *"two years, so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks, and God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul."*—

At Corinth, at Thessalonica, cities which were at that period most distinguished and enlightened, and

^a Acts v. 12. 16.

^b Acts viii. 6.

^c Acts xix. 10. 12.

^d Vid. 1 Cor. ii. 4. with the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters.

^e Vid. 1 Thess. i. 5, 6. & v. 19, 20. and Benson's History of the

and therefore the most unlikely to be misled by the delusions of fanaticism.

On this part of my subject, the miracles of the apostles, and particularly of St. Paul, have been placed by a distinguished writer, treating on the same subject, in so clear a light, that I cannot avoid availing myself of his ideas. I allude to the celebrated Lord Lyttleton, in his short but excellent treatise on the conversion of St. Paul.—“I could enter,” says he, “into a particular examination of all the miracles recorded in the Acts to have been wrought by St. Paul, and shew they were not of a nature in which enthusiasm, either in him or the persons he worked them upon, or the spectators, could have any part. When he told Elymas, the forcerer, at Paphos, before the Roman deputy, “that the *band of God was upon him, and he should be blind, not seeing the sun for a season; and immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand*—had enthusiasm in the doer or the sufferer any share in this act? If Paul, as an enthusiast, had thrown out this menace, and the effect had not followed; instead of converting the deputy, as we are told he did, he would

the first planting of Christianity, Book 3, Chap. v. § 5, vol. 2. p. 100. 2d edit. Lond. 1756.

Lord Lyttleton's Observation on the conversion of St. Paul, printed in Dublin by G. Faulkner, 1747, p. 59.

“Acts xiii. 11.

“have

“ have drawn on himself his rage and contempt ;
 “ but the effect upon Elymas could not be caused by
 “ enthusiasm in Paul, much less can it be imputed to
 “ an enthusiastic belief in that person himself, of
 “ his being struck blind, when he was not, by the
 “ words of a man, whose preaching he strenuously
 “ and bitterly opposed ; nor can we ascribe the con-
 “ version of Sergius which followed, to any enthusi-
 “ asm—a Roman proconsul was not likely to be an
 “ enthusiast ; but had he been one, he must have
 “ been bigotted to his own Gods, and therefore the
 “ less inclined to believe any miraculous power in the
 “ apostle.

“ 2 When at Troas, a young man, named Euty-
 “ chus, fell down from a high window in the third
 “ loft, and was taken up dead, while St. Paul was
 “ preaching ; could any enthusiasm, either in Paul
 “ or the congregation then present, make them be-
 “ lieve, that by the apostle’s falling on him and em-
 “ bracing him, he was restored to life ? or, could
 “ he, who was so restored, contribute any thing to it
 “ himself by any power of his own imagination ?—
 “ Affuredly not.

“ Further, the power of working miracles was
 “ not confined to St. Paul, it was also communicated
 “ to the churches he planted in different parts of the

2 Acts xx 9.

“ world.”

“ world.” In many passages of his epistles to the
 ‘ Corinthians, he tells them, “ *that to some among
 “ them was given the gift of healing by the Spirit of God;
 “ to others, the working of other miracles ; to others,
 “ divers kinds of tongues :* ” and gives directions for
 “ their more orderly use in their assemblies.” Now
 let me appeal to the unbiassed reason of every man,
 and entreat him to reflect, whether such an address as
 this is not utterly irreconcilable with every suppositi-
 on, either of enthusiasm or artifice. “ Suppose for
 “ a moment St. Paul, and the persons he addressed,
 “ were artful deceivers, how utterly ridiculous
 would it have been in an epistle *addressed to them and
 for their own use*, to advise them not to value them-
 selves too highly on these gifts, to pray for one rather
 than another, and to prefer charity to all,—to ap-
 peal to their past experience, and assert, “ the signs of
 “ an apostle have been wrought amongst you in signs
 “ and wonders, and mighty deeds ; ”—and this when
 it appears that at that very period, there were some
 amongst those whom he addressed, who envied the
 respect which the apostle enjoyed amongst his Co-
 rinthian converts, who laboured to disparage his cha-
 racter, and undermine his authority.—How absurd
 and impolitic would such an appeal in such circum-
 stances have been—how utterly inconsistent with
 every idea of fraud or artifice, and surely not less in-
 consistent with the nature of enthusiasm.—“ If in-

‘ 1 Cor. 12th, 14th and 15th chap. Lord Lyttleton’s Ob-
 servations, &c. p. 61.

"Heed the apostle had told the Corinthians, that
 "they were inspired by the Spirit of God, in some
 "ineffable manner, which they alone could under-
 "stand, but which did not discover itself by any
 "outward distinct operations, they might mistake
 "the impulse of enthusiasm for the inspiration of
 "the holy Ghost; but they could not believe,
 "against the conviction of their own minds, that
 "they spoke languages they did not speak, or healed
 "distempers they did not heal, or worked other mi-
 "racles when they worked none: undoubtedly if the
 "Corinthians were not fully assured that such mira-
 "culous powers had been, and were still exercised
 "amongst them, they must have regarded the author
 "of that epistle as a wild and frantic visionary, in-
 "stead of revering him as an apostle of God.

I shall conclude this view of the miracles wrought
 by the apostles with some general observations of the
 same eminent writer on this argument, which seem
 peculiarly important and decisive.

"Suppose that enthusiasm could make a man think
 "that he was able by a word or a touch to give sight
 "to the blind, motion to the lame, or life to the
 "dead; would that conceit of his make the blind
 "see, the lame walk, or the dead revive; and if it
 "did not, how could he persist in such an opinion,

"Vid. Lyttleton on Convers. of St. Paul p. 62, 63.

book

I

"or

“ or upon his persisting escape being shut up for a
 “ madman; but such a madness could not infect so
 “ many at once as St. Paul supposes at Corinth to have
 “ been endowed with the gift of healing, or any
 “ other miraculous power.

“ One of the miracles which they pretended to,
 “ was the speaking of languages they had never
 “ learnt, and St. Paul says he possessed this gift
 “ more than them all. If this had been a delusion of
 “ fancy—if they had spoken only gibberish, or un-
 “ meaning sounds, it would soon have appeared
 “ when they came to make use of it, where it was
 “ necessary, viz. in converting those who understood
 “ not any language, they naturally spoke; St. Paul,
 “ particularly, who travelled so far upon that design,
 “ and had such occasion to use it, must soon have
 “ discovered that this imaginary gift of the Spirit
 “ was no gift at all, but a ridiculous instance of fren-
 “ zy which had possessed both him and them.—But if
 “ those he spoke to in divers tongues understood
 “ what he said, and were converted to Christ by that
 “ means, how could it be a delusion?—Of all the
 “ miracles recorded in scripture, none are more clear
 “ from any possible imputation of being the effect of
 “ an enthusiastic imagination than this; for how
 “ could any man think he had it, if he had it not? or
 “ if he did think so, not be undeceived when he came
 “ to put his gift to the proof? accordingly I do not
 “ find such a power to have been pretended to by any
 “ enthusiast, ancient or modern.

" If then St. Paul and the church of Corinth were
 " not deceived, in ascribing to themselves this mira-
 " culous power, but really had it, there is the
 " strongest reason to think that neither were they
 " deceived in the other powers to which they pre-
 " tended ; as the same Spirit which gave them that,
 " equally could, and probably would, give them the
 " others, to serve the same holy ends for which that
 " was given ; and by consequence St. Paul was no
 " enthusiast in what he wrote on that head to the
 " Corinthians, nor in other similar instances, when
 " he ascribes to himself, or the churches which he
 " founded, any supernatural graces or gifts. Indeed
 " they who would impute to imagination, effects
 " such as those which St. Paul imputes to the
 " power of God attending his mission, must ascribe
 " to imagination the same omnipotence which he
 " ascribes to God."

SECTION

SECTION II.

The arguments from PROPHECY adduced by the apostles could not derive their weight from the influence of enthusiasm—proved in this section, so far as relates to the prophecies of the old testament, which the apostles asserted were accomplished in the person of our Saviour.

IF from miracles we pass to the other mode by which the first preachers of Christianity convinced their disciples, even the argument from prophecy—it will, I trust, appear that this was equally incapable of deriving its efficacy from any enthusiastic delusion.

This argument, as used by the apostles, almost entirely consisted in appeals to the Jewish scriptures, in which the apostles contended were clear prophecies, fulfilled by the life and sufferings of their Lord, who, according to them, united in himself all the characters by which the promised Messiah was to be distinguished.

It would be inconsistent with the subject of this essay, to enter into a detail of the arguments employed to prove this conclusion; but without any such detail it is, I think, obvious that this was a species of argument

argument which could not derive either its origin or success from the influence of fanaticism.

The prophecies to which the first preachers of Christianity appealed, not only existed, at the latest, two hundred and fifty years before their asserted accomplishment, but existed in the hands of their inveterate enemies, the Jewish scribes, priests, and Pharisees.—Over these records they had no power; they could not themselves believe, nor make their hearers believe, that these prophecies existed, if they did not exist, nor could they alter the smallest item to adapt them to the events, by which it was asserted they were fulfilled.

And as the prophecies were in no degree in their power, so neither was it possible for them to direct the correspondent events; for these had all taken place before the apostles began to preach the resurrection of their divine Master; and they had many of them been brought about by the agency of his enemies, who had been the authors of his sufferings and death, which the apostles steadily maintained were plain accomplishments of acknowledged prophecies.—Still further, these transactions were of so public

* “Two hundred and fifty years,” it is generally admitted that the Jewish scriptures were translated into Greek, at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, and copies of them deposited in the Alexandrian library at least two hundred and fifty years before Christ.

a nature

a nature, they had it as little in their power to misrepresent, as originally to direct them.

But what is most important of all, the apostles could find no pre-disposition in any Jewish mind to admit the coincidence of the prophecy and the event, instantaneously, and embrace it enthusiastically, because such an accomplishment was totally the reverse of that which Jewish minds had long expected and ardently wished.—The interpretation which the apostles gave the prophecies, and the facts to which they applied them, were such as shocked the national prejudices and the religious bigotry of their countrymen.

The Jews expected a temporal and triumphant Messiah, who was to appear suddenly in the temple, in the splendor of divine Majesty, and to live for ever.—The apostles offered to their acceptance a peasant, the reputed son of a carpenter, who lived a life of poverty, who had perished on the cross, and declared, as the event proved, that his kingdom was not of this world. The Jews expected that this Messiah would extend and perpetuate the rites and ceremonies of the mosaic law.—The apostles contended that he had weakened or annulled its obligation, and substituted in its room, a religion abolishing these rites and ceremonies. The Jews confined to themselves the title and privileges of the chosen people of God. The apostles

apostles contended, that now the period was arrived, foretold by the prophets, when God should be
 “ sought of them that asked not for him, when he
 “ should be found of them that sought him not ;
 “ that he should say, behold me, behold me, unto a
 “ nation that was not called by his name.”—When
 that was become true which was prophesied of Israel,
 —“ I have spread out my hands all day unto a re-
 “ bellious people, which walked in a way that was
 “ not good ;” when their should be “ no difference
 “ between the Jew and the Greek ; for the same
 “ Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him ;
 “ and whosoever shall call upon the name of the
 “ Lord, should be saved.”

Now, without entering into any minute proofs to shew the Jews were wrong, and the apostles right, in this interpretation of the prophecies, it seems to be clear beyond all reasonable doubt, that this *mode of interpretation* could not have been originally adopted by the apostles, or received by the converts merely from the force of enthusiasm.

Reason and experience prove, that those doctrines which fanatics embrace, are generally such as have been grounded on some pre-conceived religious opinions, such as have been long the subject of attention,

^a Isaiah lxx. 1, 2. Rom. x. 12 to 20.

^b Vid. Dr. Campbell's Discourse on Enthusiasm, p. 17, 18, and 19,

anxiety,

anxiety, and prayer; but it is highly improbable that men should, without any intervening cause, become on a sudden enthusiasts on points they had never thought on before—much more in favour of opinions, against which they had been violently prejudiced, from the first dawn of reason, by habit, instruction, religion and example; yet such opinions the Jews must have embraced before they could have admitted the crucified Jesus for the Messiah, whom the prophets had foretold: it is, I contend for it, very incredible that blind enthusiasm could have any weight in this case, except *against* the reception of such opinions. The warm and bigotted Jew would instantly reject, and, I may say, enthusiastically oppose them. The only process by which he could be induced to admit the truth of the gospel, was the most sober, deliberate, and argumentative, which can be imagined; requiring an accurate examination of the prophetic writings, and a close comparison of their contents, with the character and history of our blessed Lord.

The questions which must arise on such an enquiry, were surely such as are most remote from the influence of fanatic delusion. Whether Jesus Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, in the town of Bethlehem?—whether his character and doctrines were clearly delineated, his crucifixion and resurrection foretold in the prophecies?—whether it was a misinterpretation of these
sacred

sacred writers, to expect on their authority a temporal Messiah. These questions, and a variety of others such as these, must immediately present themselves on the first appeal to the argument from prophecy, and to decide them in favour of Christianity, required a patient attention, and a sobriety of mind, which were utterly repugnant to the very nature of enthusiasm.

Suitably to these principles, we find in the history of the first progress of the gospel, that those, and those only, who would listen to reasoning, who impartially and carefully examined the scriptures, were influenced by the apostle's appeal to them.—When at Antioch, in Phidia, Paul in the synagogue, after the reading the law and the prophets, stood up to explain what had been read; his discourse exhibits a view of the entire Jewish history, and critical explanations of some passages of scripture, as remote from the wildness of enthusiasm, as can be conceived. The Jews on that day listened with attention, and many of them, as well as of the religious profelytes, followed the apostles, who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. But when the Gentiles wished to hear the same arguments, and when on the next sabbath-day almost the whole city assembled together to hear the word of the preachers, the bigotry of the Jews would no

* Acts xiii. 14.

^d Acts xiii. 43.

longer bear the eagerness of their intrusion, "feeling the multitudes they were filled with envy, and speak against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming," and by their opposition raised such persecution against the apostles, as compelled them to save their lives by flight; nor was this fury appeased even by their flight, for they pursued the apostle to Iconium and Lystra, till they had, as they hoped, inflicted that vengeance which their enraged bigotry required; for at Lystra they "persuaded the people, and having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead."

The characters of enthusiasm are precipitation and violence; these uniformly contributed not to forward, but to oppose the success of the first preachers of Christianity.

If the Jews at ^s Berea were influenced by the reasoning of the apostles, "so that many of them believed, also of honourable women that were Greeks, and of men not a few,"—it was because they not only "received the word with all readiness of mind," but *searched the scriptures daily*, whether these things were so.

In truth it seems to me difficult in the extreme, to peruse the epistles to the Hebrews, the Romans, and

* Acts xiii. 45.

† Acts xiv. 19.

‡ Acts xvii. 10.

the Galatians, in all which this argument from the prophecies, and the general scope of the Jewish dispensation is largely applied, to confirm and illustrate the gospel, without observing a clearness of thought, an extent of information, and a sobriety of intellect, utterly repugnant to the character of enthusiasm. The ignorant and superficial may deride, because they do not understand such reasoning; but the serious and sober enquirer will trace its coherence, and admire its strength.

Admitting the truth of these principles, we cannot wonder at the confidence with which St. Paul urged this topic of argument, before King Agrippa, whom he knew to be possessed of information which qualified him to judge of its force.—“^b *I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.*” This is surely not the language of a deluded and wild visionary.—No—such men appeal to the tribunal of ignorance alone, and rely for success on the folly and the precipitance of their hearers. Not so the apostle, his was the cause of truth and soberness; he rejoiced to appeal to an enlightened and rational judge.—“I continue, says he, unto this day witnessing both to small and great, saying none other

^b Acts xxvi. the whole chapter.

“things,

“ things than those which the prophets and Moses
 “ did say should come ; that Christ should suffer,
 “ and that he should be the first that should rise
 “ from the dead, and should shew light unto the
 “ people and the Gentiles.” When the ignorance
 of the Roman governor led him to exclaim, “ Paul,
 “ too much learning hath made thee mad.” How
 calm and rational the reply !—“ I am not mad, most
 “ noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and
 “ soberness ; for the king knoweth of these things,
 “ before whom I also speak freely, for I am per-
 “ suaded none of these things are hid from him,
 “ for this thing was not done in a corner. King
 “ Agrippa believest thou the prophets ? I know that
 “ thou believest.”—Does the king’s reply disavow
 either the notoriety of the facts thus attested, or the
 validity of the argument from prophecy ?—“ *Almost,*
 “ *said Agrippa, thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*”
 More he could not have admitted without becoming
 wholly a Christian ; and this was morally impossible,
 that a proud and voluptuous Jewish monarch should,
 at the hazard of his crown, embrace the faith of an
 upstart, a despised and hated sect, the founder of
 which had been crucified, and the chief preacher of
 which appeared before him a prisoner, loaded with
 chains and obloquy ; this could not be without some
 supernatural change, violently and irresistibly over-
 powering every feeling of his soul, and subverting
 his whole moral character, and we never find mira-
 cles employed to work such a change as this. But
 would

would a wild enthusiast have been able to adduce evidence strong enough to extort such an admission from such an opponent?—would a senseless fanatic have been able to use this admission with such consummate address, united with such manly firmness and unaffected dignity, as the apostle displayed in his reply? For Paul said—“ *I would to God that not only thou, but all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.*”—No—to attribute such reasoning and such conduct to the wild ravings of enthusiasm, is to outrage every feeling of nature, and every principle of truth.

Thus it has, I trust, been shewn, that the main argument from prophecy was as remote in its origin from enthusiastic delusion, and as incapable of combining with, or deriving strength and success from fanaticism in its progress, as the proof which miracles supplied: in truth, these two modes of proof were inseparably connected together; there could have been no possible pretence for supposing, that Jesus of Nazareth, an obscure peasant, who had no one of these external characters the Jews notoriously expected in their Messiah, and all evidence about whom was closed by his death; there could, I say, have been no pretence for asserting such a character was the promised Redeemer, of

¹ Vid. Paley's Evidence of Christianity, p. 87. Dublin edit. where this argument is most clearly enforced.

“ whom

“ whom such opposite and such magnificent expectations had been conceived, except his extraordinary works had marked him out as an extraordinary personage.”—The argument from prophecy, therefore, could not for a moment have been listened to, except attention had been excited to it by the notoriety of the miracles; but when attended to, it supplied a new source of proof, which calm reason alone could advance or comprehend.

Hence it is we find the first preachers of the gospel perpetually uniting these two arguments, to convince their Jewish converts; but it is extremely important to remark, that they urged these arguments on different descriptions of their hearers, exactly as they were capable of feeling their force.—To the Jews it was that they most frequently and earnestly urged the argument from the prophetic writings, because they admitted their authority, were familiarized to their language, and therefore prepared to understand their true meaning.—While to the heathens they generally argued, from the miracles they themselves beheld, or might be assured of by evidence of most unquestionable certainty; and from the truths of natural religion, which were congenial to the reason and the feelings of every human mind, contrasted with the absurd and pernicious nature of their idolatry.

* Vide St. Paul's addresses to the heathens, at Lystra, Acts xiv. and to the court of Areopagus, at Athens, Acts xvii.

Now,

Now, let me ask, does not this mode of conducting their cause, prove not only that it was founded on reason, but that it was supported with sobriety of mind? The precipitate and blind zeal of enthusiasm would not attend to such a distinction as this; artifice and imposture would not thus submit to every hearer, principally those arguments which each would be most easily able to examine, and therefore if they were fallacious, most likely to refute. Assuredly then the apostles spoke the words of truth and soberness.

SECTION III.

The prophecies delivered by our Saviour, and such Predictions of the apostles as are connected with them, are not imputable to enthusiasm.

ON this subject of the argument from prophecy, as applied by its first preachers, to spread or to establish the belief of the gospel, it is necessary to observe further, that not only the appeal to the Jewish scriptures, on which the argument principally depended, could not derive its origin or success from enthusiasm; but that the predictions which are ascribed to our Lord, by the evangelists, as well as some instances of prophecies delivered by his followers, are remarkably

bly free from every suspicion of having been dictated by the spirit of fanaticism.

I readily will admit that enthusiasts are prone to mistake the chimeras of a disordered fancy for the visions of a prophetic illumination, and to claim credit to the rhapsodies they pour forth, as divine predictions of unquestionable certainty; but such a claim can gain little credit, except their authority has been by some other means previously established. If the fanatic ventures to foretel events immediately approaching, the failure of the prediction will soon destroy the authority of the prophet. If he pretends to penetrate into remote futurity, he will be unable to satisfy his hearers that he utters inspired predictions, because they cannot witness their accomplishment, and must therefore have some different proof of his inspiration to induce them to give credence to his words.—Thus it seems extremely improbable that an unsupported claim to a prophetic character, though it may originate in enthusiasm, should succeed in spreading it; because the claim to a divine authority is thus reduced to a trial it will seldom be able to endure, a comparison of predictions with facts.

But if for argument sake we should admit that the enthusiast may accidentally describe some delusive vision of fancy, which yet may seem to be verified by some subsequent event; or that he may conjecture

some probable occurrence, and deliver this conjecture in prophetic language, to which he is habituated : yet experience proves, that we may always discover in the nature of the supposed prophecy, or of its accomplishment, some traces of fallacy or extravagance. The prediction is vague and general, or the event such as might be easily produced, and therefore easily foreseen—frequently so trifling, we cannot conceive it should be worthy of divine interference to prefigure it—frequently so obscure and uncertain, that if we admit the genuineness of the prophecy, we cannot prove its agreement with the event by which it is asserted to have been accomplished.

The prophecies ascribed to our Lord seem remarkably free from these objections. One is, the prediction of the total destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, so total that “^m not one stone should be left upon another that should not be thrown down ;” attended with circumstances of unequalled misery—“ⁿ for then shall there be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be ; ^o then shall be great distress upon the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the

¹ Vid. Matt. xxiv. Mark xiii. Luke xxi.

^m Luke xxi. 6.

ⁿ Matt. xxiv. 21.

^o Luke xxi. 24.

“ Gentiles,

"Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The period when these events were to take place, is also clearly pointed out, and described as immediately approaching. "*P This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled; heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*"—Finally, this prediction is accompanied with a warning to his disciples, to fly from these impending calamities.—"*When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea flee unto the mountains, and let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not those who are in the countries enter therein.*"

Now that this prediction should proceed from an enthusiastic mind, cannot surely be reasonably supposed. The Jews had now been long in the habit of submitting peaceably to the Roman yoke; the polity of Rome at this period was remarkably disposed to allow to its various subject nations, the undisturbed enjoyment of their religion and their laws, and to preserve, even in war, every distinguished city, and every magnificent structure, as ornaments of its dominion, and proofs of the greatness of its power; such an event therefore as the *total destruction* of the

^p Matt. xxiv. 34. Luke xxi. 22.
Matt. xxiv. 15,

^q Luke xxi. 30.

city, and the temple of Jerusalem, by the Romans, was most highly improbable within any period of time; but that it should happen at a precise and short distance, even *before that generation passed away*, surely no human ingenuity could foresee; yet it certainly took place with circumstances of strange and unexampled misery.

But if it be said, that this prediction was falsely ascribed to our Lord by the evangelists, this supposes them to have been, not wild enthusiasts, but artful and deliberate impostors; a supposition utterly irreconcilable with the whole tenor of their writings and their lives, and which in this instance seems extremely improbable, from the internal structure of the

Archdeacon Paley in his excellent view of the evidences, part 2d. ch. i. § 2. has adduced many strong arguments to confirm the existence of this prophecy before the event. 1st. From all antiquity concurring to assign the three first gospels a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. 2d. The apostles must have been very far advanced in life at that time, and no reason can be given for their delaying so long the publication of the gospels. 3d. From there being no hint in either, that the prophecy was fulfilled. 4th. From the admonitions to the Christians. 5th. If the prophecies had been composed after the event, there would have been more *specification*. That these prophecies could not have been interpolated, is strongly confirmed by Jortin, in his remarks on ecclesiastical history, vol. i. p. 172. edit. 1751. amongst his reasons are—1st. Because they are incidentally placed up and down the gospels by way of parable, or in answer to questions, or on account of some circumstances of time or place bringing on the discourse—he quotes

the prediction itself, for it included a warning to the Christians to flee from the ruin of Jerusalem, the approach of which it taught them to discover by certain signs. Suppose then this prediction and this warning never to have been published till after the event, how plainly would it have carried with it its own falsification? how naturally would the whole body of Jewish Christians have demanded of the apostles, why was this prophecy and this warning concealed till *after* the calamity against which it was designed to guard us, had taken place? and why is it now *first* brought forward, when the time of its utility has passed, and its divine origin can no longer be ascertained? And this when it did not exist in any written record, which might be supposed to have lain till now undiscovered, but was delivered (according to your own account) to you, *thea* postles, surely for the purpose of preserving, by forewarning, your brethren.

Again—with this prophecy our Lord unites a clear description of the persecutions which his immediate followers should sustain:—"Before all these things

quotes the following texts:—Matt. i. 23.—xvi. 13.—xvi. 28.—xvi. 29.—xvi. 41.—xvii. 7.—xxiii. 36. Luke xi. 50.—xiii. 3.—xvii. 24.—xix. 27.—xix. 42.—xxiii. 28. John v. 22.—xxi. 22. 2d. Because no Jews or Pagans ever reproached the Christians with inserting these prophecies. Other reasons of his I have adopted in the text, and endeavoured to confirm and improve.

* Luke xxi. 12—16—17.

" they

" they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute
 " you, delivering you up to the synagogues and
 " unto prisons, being brought before kings and
 " rulers for my name's sake; and ye shall be be-
 " trayed both by parents, and brethren, and kins-
 " folks, and friends, and some of you shall they
 " cause to be put to death, and ye shall be hated by
 " all men for my name's sake." ' Now, if these
 persecutions did not exist, would impostors be mad
 enough to ascribe such predictions to their master,
 and without any conceivable motive make him a
 prophet of falsehoods, though the success of their
 own supposed schemes depended on the reception of
 his divine authority?—If these persecutions existed,
 what could induce impostors to sustain them? and
 impostors they must have been if they falsely ascribed
 these predictions to their Lord; or, what could
 enable them to maintain their cause against such per-
 secution? And was it not totally inconsistent with
 the nature of fraud and imposture, to accompany the
 supposed prediction of these persecutions with such ad-
 vice, and such a promise as the following?—" When
 " they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no
 " thought before hand what ye shall speak, neither
 " do ye premeditate, but what shall be given you in
 " that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that
 " speak, but the Holy Ghost." And I will give you

Vid. Paley's Evidence, part 1st. ch. iii. § 1.

" Luke xxi. 14, 15 and 16.

“ a mouth, and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, or resist.”

The very obscurity of some parts of this prophecy seems as inconsistent with fraud, as the plainness and exact accomplishment of others is unaccountable, on the supposition of fanaticism. An impostor writing *after* the event, would take care not to diminish the credit of his supposed prediction, by leaving its application *doubtful* or *obscure*; yet it is certain many Christians did very early so far mistake this prophecy, as to apply it not only to the destruction of Jerusalem, but also to the end of the world; and to expect the immediate approach of the final judgment, an error which St. Peter and St. Paul in different passages expressly and earnestly correct, and in a manner totally remote from every appearance of enthusiasm or imposture. Enthusiasts would more probably cherish than detect such a delusion, calculated as it was to make a deep religious impression on the minds of men; and impostors, if they found it necessary to correct an erroneous interpretation of any supposed prediction uttered by themselves, would naturally point out its exact accommodation to the event, which alone they had intended to mark out by it, and would be doubly cautious of exposing themselves to new difficulties, by uttering new predictions;—whereas St. Paul, addressing the ² Thessalonians, and warning them, “ not to be troubled by word or by

^x 2 Thess. the entire 2d chap.

“ letter:

"letter as from us, that the day of Christ is at hand," adds a declaration, that that day should not come till after some signal apostacy, and the revealing of some mighty and unrighteous power, which he terms "*the man of sin,*" the character and progress of which, he reminds them he had already in conversation described to them, and now therefore only briefly touches on.

' Thus also St. Peter, while he asserts the certainty of their Lord's coming to judge the world, yet declares it should be so long deferred, that immoral and impious men should scoff at the delay. How remote from enthusiasm, or from deceit, are such predictions in both the apostles? May we not reason with a late ² judicious writer, that a fanatic would have been slow to entertain in his own mind, or to disclose to his hearers and correspondents, such discouraging ideas; and that a hypocrite would not have betrayed these discrediting particulars of his own plan, by foretelling the depravity of those who should hereafter embrace it.

Finally, it seems probable, for the same reason, that if impostors had fabricated such a prediction after the event, in order to gain credit to their Lord,

¹ 2 Peter, the entire 3d chap.

² Dr. Mainwaring, professor of divinity in Cambridge, in his sermon preached before the university, the 3d of May, 1795, p. 2.

they would have confined themselves to that event, as the only one which it was consistent with their purpose to allude to.—Now, this is not the case ;—this prophecy does not confine itself to the immediate event of the destruction of Jerusalem, but predicts a *continuation* of its desolate and ruinous state.

“ Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, “ till the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.”—

Now, to this hour Jerusalem is trodden of the Gentiles, and to this hour the event, denoted by the *times of the Gentiles being fulfilled*, in whatever sense we interpret these words, has not taken place. Is the prediction of this coincidence of two continued and independent circumstances, in the course of human affairs, for above one thousand seven hundred years, to be accounted for, either by enthusiasm or imposture.

But I must forbear enlarging on such prophecies of the new testament, as were not fully accomplished during the lives of those to whom it was first addressed ; as these could have formed no part of the evidence on which the first converts received the gospel, which only I am now obliged to consider. Undoubtedly no argument more decisively proves the genuine inspiration, and divine authority, of the apostolic writings, than the predictions found in them, of the successive fortunes of Christianity, from its first promulgation to the present hour ; predictions which have been constantly and gradually accomplished

plished on the earth, and are at this moment advancing to a still more perfect and signal completion.

But this important argument, which every day receives accumulated evidence, need not be introduced here, it has been ably and fully treated of by * many writers, whose works I would earnestly recommend to every man who wishes to confirm his faith, and impress upon his heart a deep sense of the divine origin and stupendous importance of the Christian scheme. I shall conclude my remarks on this part of

* Amongst the most useful of these works are the following: Lardner on the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions concerning the Jews—Jewish and Heathen testimonies, vol. 1. ch. iii.—Seventh vol. of Dr. Keppis's edition—Ditto, in his three sermons, on the state of the Jews, vol. 10, p. 63—Newton's dissertations on the prophecies—Bishops Hurd, Halifax and Bagot, in their sermons preached at Warburton's lecture—Worthington's sermons, preached at Boyle's lecture, 1766—Sharpe's second argument in defence of Christianity—Kidder's demonstration of the Messiah—The works of Joseph Mede, and Henry More—The approved commentators on the New Testament, especially on the Revelations—Whiston's scripture prophecies—* Dr. Macknight's truth of the gospel history, p. 199—Miller's history of the propagation of Christianity—* Benson's essay on the man of sin, in his paraphrase on the Epistles, p. 268—And to mention no more, the Rev. E. W. Whitaker, in his general and connected view of the prophecies relating to the times of the Gentiles, Egham, 1795, sold by Rivington, in London, 1 vol. 12mo. a work which must interest the generality of readers, as the author adduces the testimony of the celebrated Mr. Gibbon, to the facts which, as he alledges, prove the accomplishment of the scripture prophecies.

N. B. The tracts marked * are re-printed in the 5th vol. of Bishop Watson's excellent collection.

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the subject, by observing, that as the prophecies contained in the apostolic writings, which by their speedy accomplishment may have contributed to conciliate or to confirm the faith of the first converts, are evidently such as enthusiasm did not dictate; so also these writings rarely contain any predictions of events immediately approaching, except those delivered by our Lord, which we have now considered; and the few they do contain are not ascribed to the apostles or evangelists themselves.

In the Acts of the apostles I have observed only the following predictions. One, of the ^b famine which took place in the days of Claudius Cæsar, and which was related, not merely to shew the inspiration of the prophet, but because it was connected with the subject of the history; as in consequence of it a contribution was raised in the different churches for the Christians in Judea—a fact to which frequent allusions are made, both in the Acts and Epistles.—Another was pronounced, ^c when St. Paul was going up to Jerusalem, declaring, that the Jews there would bind him, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles; which seems also to have been mentioned, not so much for its own sake, as to introduce the affecting incidents connected with it. When the Christians, at Cæsarea, besought the apostle, that he would not go up to Jerusalem; and he answered,

^b Acts xi. 30.

^c Ib. xxi. 10.

with the firmness of a martyr, and the tenderness of a parent, “ what mean you to weep and to break
 “ mine heart, for I am ready, not to be bound only,
 “ but to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord
 “ Jesus.” Both these predictions are ascribed to the
 same person, *Agabus*, who does not seem to have
 been distinguished on any other account in the Chris-
 tian church.

St. Paul himself is described in one place, when
 in danger from a violent tempest*, to have received an
 assurance, that he, and all his companions in the
 voyage, should escape; and in another, he exhorts
 the Thessalonians, not to be moved with his afflictions,
 for “ *yourselfes, says the apostle, know that we are*
 “ *appointed thereunto; for verily, when we were with*
 “ *you we told you before, that we should suffer tribula-*
 “ *tion, even as it came to pass, and ye know.*” But
 though assured that he was appointed to sustain suf-
 fering in general, yet he confesses himself ignorant
 of the particular mode of suffering which awaited
 him; for before he heard the prophecy of *Agabus*,
 as to the particular event of his journey to Jerusalem,
 he declares to the church at Ephesus—“ Behold I

* Acts xii. 13.

* Ib. 27. 10.

* 1 Thes. iii. 3.

* Acts ix. 17.—The entire address is well worth perusal; conscious truth and honesty, sincere piety, and prudent, but earnest zeal, breath forth so forcibly in every part of it, as can scarcely fail of penetrating the heart, and convincing the understanding of every reader.

“ go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, *not knowing*
 “ the things which shall befall me there, save that
 “ the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying,
 “ that bonds and afflictions abide me; and now be-
 “ hold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone
 “ preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face
 “ no more.”—Now, I appeal to every candid mind,
 whether the tenor of this narration, and of these
 sentiments, is not very different from what we should
 naturally expect either from deceivers or fanatics?
 Would men who fabricated a history to gain the re-
 putation of a prophetic character for themselves or
 others, ascribe the most striking and important pre-
 dictions, not to themselves, or to those whose cha-
 racters they wished to exalt, but to some other ob-
 scure individual, who is represented as expressly
 revealing what they before had been ignorant of?—
 Such confessions as these never proceed from impos-
 tors.—On the other hand, would wild enthusiasts,
 wrapt in the vain dreams of a perpetually superin-
 tending inspiration, have thus strictly limited their
 pretensions to prophetic light, to a few events of
 their lives, out of a great multitude, confessing
 themselves in others totally dark and ignorant?—
 would they have been able to say to the overpower-
 ing torrent of fanatic delusion—so far shall you go,
 but no further? Assuredly not.—Let me add, that
 when the apostles deliver predictions of remote events
 affecting the interests of the church in distant ages,
 while they confess themselves ignorant of many,
 which

which were immediately interesting to themselves; this seems exactly conformable to what we should expect from the inspiration of that wisdom which descended from above, not to gratify their private curiosity, or to promote their personal advantage, but to exhibit them as the lights of the world, in whom the spirit of prophecy should bear testimony to Jesus—a testimony, whose clearness should increase with the progress of time, and whose full splendor should be reserved, to illuminate the remotest periods of futurity.

SECTION IV.

The mode in which the apostles proposed the evidence of Christianity was free from enthusiasm.

IF from the nature of the evidence offered by the apostles, we turn our attention to the mode in which it was proposed, we shall be still more clearly convinced of the truth and soberness with which their instructions were enforced. It has indeed been sometimes ^a alledged, in order to shew that the acceptance of Christianity was not founded on rational conviction, that its first teachers did not give their

^a Vid. Christianity not founded on argument, p. 39, with Doddridge's reply, letter ii. p. 10. and Dr. Randolph's Christian faith a rational assent, p. 180 to 195.

hearers *sufficient time* to examine the proofs which they advanced ;—but this is directly contradicted by the history of the apostles. In many instances, doubtless, the direct exhibition of clear and uncontroverted miracles to the senses of men, joined with the immediate interference of the Spirit of God, produced such full and instantaneous conviction, as rendered all abstract reasoning superfluous and impertinent ; hence three thousand of those who witnessed the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost at the feast of Pentecost, were converted at once ; and the subsequent miracles of the apostles increased the number speedily to five thousand. But the general progress of the gospel, though rapid enough to evince the interposition of divine power, was yet sufficiently deliberate and gradual, to afford full room for the exercise of calm reason and sober enquiry, in those by whom it was embraced. At Antioch, Paul and Barnabas, for “ a *whole year*, assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people ;” from thence they were delegated, after deliberate prayer and fasting, to preach the gospel to the surrounding region ; and when they had executed their commission, during an absence of considerable length, they returned to Antioch, and ^k abode there a *long time* with the disciples. ^l At Corinth, though St. Paul had the most extensive province of any of the apostles, yet he continued a *year and six months*

^l Acts xi. 26.^k Ib. xiv. 28.^l Ib. xviii. 4 and 11.

teaching the word of God, and “ reasoned publicly in the synagogue every sabbath, persuading the Jews and Greeks.”

To the inhabitants of Ephesus he appeals, ^m that he had not ceased to warn them night and day “ for the space of *three years*.”—“ At ⁿ Rome “ Paul dwelt *two years* in his own hired house, and “ received all that came unto him, preaching the “ kingdom of God, and teaching those things which “ concern the Lord Jesus Christ.”—Besides this, the apostles ^o frequently in their circuits returned again to the same places, and when they could not conveniently go themselves, they sent other teachers to plant the gospel, or establish it where planted; and in every city where they came, they ordained elders capable of building on the foundation they had laid, and teaching all who desired to receive instruction. And as both our Lord and his apostles afforded sufficient time for enquiry, they also adduced the evidence, which they supplied for the truth of Christianity, in that ^p manner which was most natural and simple,

^m Acts xx. 31.

ⁿ Ib. xxviii. the end.

^o Vid. Acts xiv. 21 to 25. Ib. xv. 41.

* For these observations on the manner in which our Saviour and his apostles proposed the evidences of Christianity, and its propriety, I am indebted to Dr. Alexander Gerard, professor of divinity in the college of Aberdeen, who in his volume of dissertations on subjects relating to the genius and evidence of Christianity, published in London and Edinburgh, 1766, has a copious and elaborate dissertation on this subject.

and best calculated to prove its truth and reality ; they proposed the evidence of their mission in two very different situations, to those who had not yet expressed any prejudice against the gospel, or against the proofs of its divinity, and also to those who were actuated by strong prejudices, engaged in active opposition, and who raised the most forcible objections they could discover : in these opposite situations they proposed the evidences of the gospel, in *different manners*, each of which was exactly proper in the circumstances under which it was employed, and each proves the truth and soberness which attended the promulgation of Christianity.

In addressing those who *did not raise objections* against the evidences, it was their uniform method to satisfy themselves with *barely exhibiting these evidences* ; they laboured not to prove by argumentation, that they were sufficient ; they were not at pains either to prevent or remove every objection which might be started ; they explained not minutely the particular manner in which each evidence supported their mission.

Thus our Saviour delivered the most pure and excellent doctrines ; but, except when driven to it by opposition, he did not *urge* their excellence as a proof of their divinity, he left his hearers to *feel* the excellence of his religion, and conclude for themselves, that it was of divine original ; it was not by means of

his encomiums, but by their own perceptions, that great numbers discovered the features of divinity in his discourses.

He exhibited the proof of his mission, arising from miracles, with equal simplicity; those miracles were of the most various and stupendous kinds; having performed them, he entered into no laboured detail of the circumstances which shewed their reality, he left them to speak for themselves, and to support both their reality and their force by their internal characters of divine power. Thus also, he did not, at the time of working every particular miracle, alledge it as a proof of the truth of his doctrines, he laid claim to a divine mission, and constantly delivered his doctrines as from God; but a general declaration of the intention of his miracles, with an appeal to them on some particular occasions, was sufficient for rendering them vouchers of his mission, and with this he was content.

Our Lord directed his disciples to use the very same method. When he sent forth the twelve, his instructions were—"preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand; heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils—freely ye have received, freely give."—To the seventy disciples he also gave similar instructions; instead of teach-

ing them arguments, he commanded them to work miracles; this was the evidence he directed them to produce; and during the whole course of their ministry, the apostles were contented with simply exhibiting the evidences of Christianity whenever some very immediate and particular opposition did not require their doing otherwise;—they alledge the miracles of their Lord—they insist particularly on his resurrection—they relate occasionally the circumstances which attended these facts, and which put their reality beyond doubt; but they do not argue on those circumstances, they speak of them as what they knew to be true, and what all sincere enquirers would certainly find to be true, and they seem to reckon this *enough*; they often appeal to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and barely appealed to them without any laboured application; they also themselves worked many miracles, they healed diseases, cast out devils, raised the dead, exercised various gifts of the Spirit; they gave their miracles a connection with the gospel, by working them with a professed design to confirm the doctrine which they preached, and by declaring, as often as it was necessary, that they wrought them in the name of Jesus Christ; but they do this with the greatest simplicity, without any laboured arguments to support, or any strong assertions of the importance of these miracles.

Such was the original manner in which the evidences of the gospel were proposed to the impartial

and unprejudiced observer ; and it was certainly a mode which soberness only could dictate, and truth only render effectual. Our Saviour and his apostles wrought their miracles in such circumstances, as rendered men attentive to them, and forced them to perceive their reality by their own senses ; and this was exactly the mode which the soundest reason would prescribe ; without the evidence of sense the most peremptory assertion that a miracle was wrought, will not satisfy those who must have seen it if it had been wrought ; and if it was certainly perceived by the senses, all assertions of its reality were superfluous.

The topics of doubt and difficulty, which occur to us in reasoning on the miracles now, could not subsist at the time they were performed. We are under the necessity of proving they were, in fact, performed by our Saviour and his apostles ; but the spectators *saw* this. We are prone to suspect that we may be ignorant of some circumstances of these facts necessary for determining their real nature ; but to those who were eye-witnesses of all these circumstances, if they rendered them plainly miraculous, this must be perceived by their senses—if they left the miracle equivocal, scarce any arguments would prove they did not, at least the necessity of using arguments would indicate strongly, that the miracles were of an equivocal kind.

Hence

Hence we account for circumstances which have been adduced to prove that Christianity was not founded on rational argument, but on blind enthusiasm; even the *immediate assent* which was demanded, without, as it is said, "allowing time for doubt or deliberation," and the "*approbation* with which a ready acquiescence in the gospel was received," as well as the *severity* with which its rejection, was sometimes menaced.—The evidence offered was not intricate reasoning in proof of each doctrine separately, which would have required long examination; miracles were wrought, and led men to conclude at once the divine mission of those who wrought them, and consequently the truth of all the doctrines which they delivered in the name of God; if such evidence was fit to work immediate conviction, it was really commendable to attend to it without prejudice, and yield to it readily, since its force might be perceived in an instant. Inattention or rejection could scarcely arise from any thing but an impious indifference to the will of God, or some perversion of understanding, the effect of a depraved and vicious heart.—But this plain and artless mode of proposing the proofs of Christianity, would have had no success if their evidence had not been *solid*.—Slender evidence will not succeed, except it is set off by specious reasonings, except some method is used for giving the appearance of evidence

^r Vid. Christianity not founded on argument, p. 35 to 39.

where

where there is none, or of greater than there really is, by artificially diverting the attention of the mind from the want or the defects of the proofs; but in the proposal of the gospel nothing of this kind took place, its proofs were presented naked and unadorned;—now, is it possible this method could have succeeded, if there had been no real evidence?—must not the defect have been quickly perceived when no means were employed to conceal it?—Never was a falsehood successfully inculcated by a bare exhibition of pretended evidence, without any art or pains employed for concealing the defect, and imposing on the understanding. On the contrary, supposing the reality of the proofs adduced, this *simple* method of proposing them was not only *sufficient* to induce men to believe the gospel, it was also the *fittest* for this purpose; the more simply evidence can be in any case proposed, consistently with clearness, the more readily it will produce conviction; subtle reasonings, if they are not absolutely necessary, only burden the proof and perplex the understanding. The *simple manner* of proposing the evidence of Christianity was the best adapted to the generality of mankind, and therefore speaks itself, not obscurely, to be the offspring of that wisdom which fixed the human constitution.

In fine, this simplicity of manner was equally inconsistent with the artifice of impostors, who labour to set off the slight evidence, which only they can produce,

produce, with a parade of argument, and with the dogmatical violence of enthusiasts, who assert positively, and repeatedly, the certainty of their divine authority, but produce not any proofs to establish it; —directly the reverse of this was the manner in which the evidence of Christianity was proposed, exhibiting direct proofs and facts, but exhibiting them with an artless simplicity and calm dignity, well suited to conscious truth and genuine inspiration. —

Thus it appears, that the original manner of proposing the evidences of Christianity, adopted by our Lord, and his apostles, to those who were candid and unprejudiced, was plain and artless, but at the same time most clear and convincing, most calm and dignified; but amongst those who were prejudiced and hostile, who laboured to raise objections, and to find some pretexts for rejecting the proofs thus plainly submitted to them, they proceeded in a manner different indeed, but equally natural, rational, and convincing; they did not on such occasions proudly attempt to silence enquiry, or refuse to answer it; they did not content themselves with barely repeating positive assertions of their divine mission, and denouncing condemnation to all who presumed to doubt of it:—no,—as far as the peculiar circumstances of the case would admit, they obviated the objections that were raised; they removed the prejudices which prevented the full force of the evidence.

evidence offered from being seen or acknowledged ; they vindicated their characters from calumny ; they pointed out the erroneous interpretations of the prophets, which led the Jews to form wrong expectations of the Messiah ; they corrected their perversions of morality, which rendered them unfavourable to the purity of the gospel ; they addressed to the different classes of their hearers such arguments as seemed best suited to their previous information, and best calculated to win their assent.—Thus they confirmed and illustrated the evidence which had been originally proposed ; they removed many objections ; they added many new circumstances ; the simplicity of the manner in which, in the first instance, they submitted to men's observation the proofs of Christianity, shewed they were fully assured of their certainty ; while the readiness with which they submitted these proofs to strict scrutiny, and entered into argumentation in defence of them, as far as was necessary, afforded a still further proof of their sincerity and zeal ; in both they shewed soundness of understanding and sobriety of mind, utterly inconsistent with the weakness and incoherence of fanaticism, as well as the cunning and caution of imposture.

That this, as it may be termed, *argumentative manner*, was frequently adopted by our Saviour, and his apostles, we have even in the course of this work

* Vid. particularly, chap. i. sect. 3d and 4th ; and this chapter, sect. 1st and 2d.

seen

seen so many instances as may render any minute detail of them here unnecessary. We have seen that our Saviour submitted his miracles fearlessly to the scrutiny of his enemies, and performed them in such a manner as excited the attention of these enemies : we have seen that the strongest appeals to his works, as clear proofs of his divine mission, and his most direct application of the prophecies to himself, were made in consequence of the opposition of the Pharisees, and of the message from the Baptist ; we have accounted for his sometimes concealing his miracles, and refusing a sign to the Pharisees, which at first seem most objectionable in this view ; we have shewn that the apostles addressed to the Jews and the Heathens those arguments, on whose validity they could best decide—and it is plain, that they frequently exhorted men to exercise their reason, in observing the nature and tendency of the doctrines taught, and thence judging of their divine original, and in searching the scriptures for themselves.—Thus the Bereans are represented as more noble than the inhabitants of Thessalonica, because they not only received the word with readiness, “ but searched the scriptures daily, *whether these things were so.*”

The discourses, and much more the epistles, which they addressed to their converts, abound with appeals to recent facts, to acknowledged prophecies, with historical deductions, and close inferences, answers to objections, and solutions of difficulties, which
senseless

senseless fanatics would have wanted both inclination and capacity to supply.

But the *writings* of the apostles, considered as criterions of their freedom from fanaticism, will form the object of further discussion; for the present it is sufficient to observe, that had their success depended on the impulse of enthusiasm—were men to have been converted by a silent whisper, or an irresistible light from heaven, that flashed conviction on their souls, it should seem that miracles and prophecies would have been useless, arguments impertinent, and instructions superfluous. Thus every page of the New Testament appears to confute those rash and superficial declaimers, who attribute to wild fanaticism the origin and success of a scheme, which every where lays its foundation on plain facts, and vindicates its truth by sober reasoning.

Here then I might with safety rest the decision of this question, and contend that enthusiasm could not have been the source of the zeal with which the apostles maintained the resurrection, and divine authority of their crucified Lord; or of the success which they obtained in the promulgation of the gospel; because the proofs of miraculous power on which their own conviction was founded, as well as those by which they convinced their converts, were such as excluded the possibility of mistake or delusion—plain facts, submitted to the deliberate examination

examination of the senses—facts various, repeated, permanent, and decidedly supernatural and divine,—And the arguments derived from the prophecies which our Saviour delivered or fulfilled, were rational, clear and satisfactory—while in the apostles we discover the strongest marks of sobriety of mind, from their advancing no claim to a prophetic character, further than was strictly supported by truth, and their delivering only such predictions, as it was most likely should have been dictated by divine inspiration; predictions, not applying to immediate or private circumstances, but to events of most signal importance and of remote accomplishment.

But though these are the great principles on which we should fix our attention, it may yet be satisfactory to pursue our enquiry somewhat further, and vindicate the apostles and evangelists from every suspicion, that they did at all distort the facts they relate, or corrupt the doctrines they deliver with any mixture of fanatic extravagance, by shewing that this sobriety of mind appears so strongly predominant in the uniform tenor of their *conduct*, and of their *writings*, that we must confess them wholly free from those weaknesses that give rise to enthusiasm, and all the follies and extravagancies which attend and expose its influence.

CHAPTER III.

The CONDUCT of the apostles, shewn to be inconsistent with the supposition of their having been enthusiasts.

SECTION I.

The general conduct of the apostles in their private capacity, inconsistent with enthusiasm.

IN the first chapter we examined the strength of that evidence, by which the apostles had been themselves assured of their divine mission; and in the second, the clearness of the proofs which they adduced to convince their profelytes; and it has, I trust, appeared, that these first teachers of our holy faith cannot justly be charged, either with that rash credulity, which is itself the easy dupe of delusion, or that presumptuous dogmatism, which imposes its delusions on others, both which seem to be primary and essential characters of genuine fanaticism. Let us in the next place compare the *conduct* of the apostles

apostles with that which enthusiasm would naturally produce.

Now, we ever find that, so far as this prevails, reason and judgment are proportionably laid aside; the mode in which this weakness displays itself, will necessarily vary with the peculiar temper and character of him who labours under it; but in every temper and character extravagance and folly will appear. Is the enthusiast naturally gloomy and despondent? we shall find him overpowered by religious melancholy and abstraction, devoted to excessive mortification and fantastic penances. Is he sanguine and violent? we shall see him rush forward in the hot pursuit, to which he conceives himself driven by a divine impulse, without any regard to reason or discretion, perpetually trampling on the restraints of order and decency—not only ready to sustain, but impatient to search out and court persecution, danger and death. In both cases he is alienated from and unfitted for the relations and offices of common life; such men will not labour, it is unworthy their sanctity; they will despise all human distinctions as beneath their notice: thus, though the end pursued may be religious and praise-worthy, the means employed to attain it will be found, in some respect or other, extravagant and absurd. Now the conduct of the apostles, as it is *incidentally* disclosed to us by the artless historian, who has described the first establishment

ment of Christianity, appears entirely free from these various weaknesses.

We discover in their mode of life no melancholy, no abstraction from society, no aversion to labour; in the interval between the resurrection of their Lord and the commencement of their own public ministry, we find they had returned to the calm and humble pursuit of that laborious industry which had originally formed their sole occupation. They were employed in *'fishing'* on the lake Tiberias, when our Lord appeared to them, and by the miraculous success, which at his word they obtained, convinced them he still retained the same divine power which they had seen exercised on a similar occasion in the commencement of his ministry. Such a situation and employment were as remote from enthusiasm as can be imagined.

They were commanded by their Lord to wait at Jerusalem, before they published his "resurrection," "till they should receive power from on high," and they waited patiently for forty days; enthusiasm is violent and sudden—their faith was rational, and therefore their conduct deliberate. But even after they received this promised power, and in consequence of the sacred commission dedicated their whole lives to preaching the gospel of Christ, they

¹ John xxi.

² Luke xxiv. 49.

yet were not ^x elevated above the common relations ; they did not undervalue the common duties of life.—The very reverse—they frequently recalled men to observe, but never encouraged them to neglect such duties, to abandon business or industry, and to retire to the cave or the desert, for the purpose of indulging indolence or spiritual pride beneath the mask of devotion, and thus becoming a burthen to others for their support, without contributing any thing to the general good.

We observe in their conduct no unnecessary austerities, no self-inflicted sufferings, no habitual melancholy, not even in St. Paul, whose conduct is more particularly detailed, and whose remorse for having persecuted the church of Christ, had made the deepest impression on his soul ; even he did not attempt to atone for his offence by solitude and penance, but by indefatigable activity in the service of that Christ whom he had persecuted :—this was sincerity, not enthusiasm.

^x The following passages shew that the apostles both in their practice and precepts attended to the natural relations of life.—

“ Have we not power, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 5. to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas ; ”—and 1 Tim. iii. 2 and 4. “ A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach—one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity ; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God.”

Addressing

Addressing himself to the Thessalonians he has this remarkable appeal.—“¹ For yourselves know
 “ how ye ought to follow us ; for we behaved not
 “ ourselves disorderly among you, neither did we eat
 “ any man’s bread for nought, but wrought with
 “ labour and travel, night and day, that we might
 “ not be chargeable to any of you ; not because
 “ we have not power, but to make ourselves
 “ an example to you to follow us. For even
 “ when we were with you, this we commanded you,
 “ that if any would not work, neither should he
 “ eat ; for we hear that there are some which walk
 “ among you disorderly, working not at all, but are
 “ busy-bodies : now them that are such we com-
 “ mand, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ,
 “ that with quietness they work, and eat their own
 “ bread.” How totally remote this from the self-
 interest of imposture, or the wildness of enthu-
 siasm.

What St. Paul asserts of himself and his immediate companions (Silvanus and Timotheus) he in another place declares of all the apostles. Addressing the Corinthians, he tells them—“ I think God has set
 “ forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed
 “ unto death²—even unto this present hour we
 “ both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are
 “ buffeted, having no certain dwelling-place, and

¹ 2 Thes. iii. 7—12.

² 1 Cor. iv. 9—12.

"labour, working with our own hands."—Impostors would not adhere to a religion attended with such difficulties; enthusiasts would not endeavour to exhibit an example of active, humble industry, even in the midst of the most severe persecutions, and most important religious avocations. I conclude, that the conduct, as well as the words of the apostles, bespeak truth and soberness.

SECTION II.

The conduct of the apostles in the regulation of the church, proves them to have been exempt from enthusiasm.

THE same sobriety of mind which displayed itself in the personal conduct of the apostles, was equally conspicuous in the regulation of the Christian church, over which they presided. In this view I would call the attention of my reader to a transaction which took place before they entered on their public ministry, and which I notice, because it seems equally inconsistent with imposture and enthusiasm.—Peter collects the disciples, in number one hundred and twenty, and proposes to supply the place of the fallen

Judas. Now was this a measure which *impostors* would adopt? If a^d monopoly of power or influence was designed, would the men who possessed this monopoly propose or consent, without any apparent necessity, to admit an obscure individual to the same rank, amongst the new converts, which they themselves enjoyed?—no, certainly. But consider the qualifications required in this substitute, and judge whether they are such as *enthusiasts* would naturally have selected. Did they look for that individual amongst the converts most distinguished for warm zeal, spiritual extacies, or extravagant austerity?—Far otherwise, no such ideas seem to have once entered into the imagination of the proposer. He looked for those qualities which would give the new apostle's testimony the greatest weight in the judgment of sober reason, but which enthusiasm would have neglected or despised; he sought for one who must have had full opportunity of examining all the facts which it was necessary he should attest: "Of these men, says St. Peter, which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

See *Ussher's* *Notes to Hartley*, vol. iii. p. 610, London 1796, for this part of this remark.

^d Acts i. 21.

The

The manner of the election, while it displays a deep and heartfelt piety, with a firm confidence, that the religion they taught was under the immediate protection of that divine Power which had already borne witness to it by the most stupendous miracles ; yet was it as sober and regular as it was pious and sincere. They appointed two persons, and they prayed and said, ° “Thou Lord, who knowest the
 “ hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou
 “ hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry
 “ and apostleship from which Judas by transgression
 “ fell, that he might go to his own place ; and they
 “ gave forth their lots, and he on whom the lot
 “ fell was numbered with the eleven apostles.”—The calm and decorous manner in which the apostate Judas is here mentioned, seems as inconsistent with the violence of enthusiasm, as the qualification sought for in his substitute, and the mode of the selection. All these circumstances bespeak truth and piety ; all are inconsistent with fraud or fanaticism.

Another transaction of somewhat a similar nature, seems equally to prove that the apostles were devoid of every interested view which impostors might entertain, and directed by prudence and discretion in the conduct of their religious concerns, which enthusiasts scarcely ever observe.

° Acts i. 24.

The first converts felt their minds impressed by the miracles they beheld with so deep a sense of the importance of religion, above every temporal concern, that “as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet, and distribution was made to every man (in the Christian society) according as he had need.” Now here was an occasion which *interested men* would have improved to their own advantage, by urging the continuance of this community of goods as a *duty*, and cautiously reserving to themselves the management of the fund it supplied, as the most valuable appendage of their ministry; on the other hand, *enthusiasts* would have probably encouraged this neglect of all temporal concerns with avidity, as suited to the fervor of religious zeal, which in their eyes would form the highest merit. Not so the apostles—of this community of goods they took no advantage; they distributed to each as they had need; they reserved to themselves, if any thing, certainly no more than supplied the present necessities of life, as appears from their subsequent and continued poverty; and even present necessities they frequently procured by their own labour. And what is equally striking, the whole New Testament does not contain a single passage, representing this community of goods as a *duty* which Christianity enjoins:—it was an il-

* Acts iv. 34, 35.

lustrious act of liberality, suited to the circumstances existing at that particular place and period, but no where recommended for general adoption. St. Paul confirms the dictates of reason on this subject, by the authority of revelation, when he declares that none have a right to be supported by others, except such as are incapable of providing for themselves, and destitute of those relatives from whom nature dictates they should obtain relief. In describing the rules by which the distribution of Christian beneficence should be regulated, he directs * “ if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to *show piety* “ at home, and to requite *their parents*, for this is “ good and acceptable before God; but if any provide “ not for his own, and especially for those of his “ own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse “ than an infidel.” How remote is this from the language of fanaticism? However, on this subject it is necessary farther to observe, that the singular and unparalleled liberality of the first Christians, undoubtedly placed the apostles in a trying and suspicious situation; and the manner in which they acted, indicates prudence and discretion, as strongly as it displays piety and zeal †.

“ When the number of the disciples was multiplied, “ (says the historian) there arose a murmuring of the “ Grecians against the Hebrews, because their wi-

* 1 Timothy v. 4th and 8th verses. † Acts vi. 1.

“ dows

“ dows were neglected in the daily ministration.
 “ Then the twelve called the multitude of the dis-
 “ ciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that
 “ we should leave the word of God and serve tables
 “ (*to preside over this distribution*)—wherefore, bre-
 “ thren, look ye out among you seven men of honest
 “ report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, whom
 “ we may appoint over this business; but we will
 “ give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the
 “ ministry of the word.”

This total abdication of all interference with the
 pecuniary concerns of the society, and even with the
 selection of the persons appointed to conduct them,
 was undoubtedly the most effectual measure which
 prudence could suggest to honesty, for totally re-
 moving every possibility of obloquy and ^suspicion.
 But it was such a measure as interested men would
 not have consented to, and enthusiasts would scarcely
 have devised.

If from these particular transactions, we turn our
 attention to the general mode of conducting the af-

* If we allow, what seems probable from the names of these
 deacons, which are all *Grecian*, and from the country of one of
 them, (*Antioch*) that several of them were Grecian Profelytes,
 it will be an argument of prudence and impartiality in the
 Christians who chose them, and in the apostles who assented
 to the choice, as such would be sure to see, that the Grecians
 had justice done them in the distribution of the charity.—
 Vid. Pole's Synôpsis, on Acts vi. 5. and Pyle's Paraphrase.

fairs

fairs of the society instituted by the apostles, we shall observe an ^h order, regularity, and subordination, very remote from the wild and levelling principles of impetuous fanaticism. — We find that the parent church at Jerusalem, over which the apostles constantly presided, preserved a connection, and held occasional correspondence with the societies formed in the various cities of Asia, Greece, and Italy; that ministers were sent thence, to instruct, to direct, and to preside over the newly instituted churches; ¹ that questions of moment were, when necessary, referred to the decision of this parent church; and that to decide them, the apostles assembled, together with the elders and the great body of the believers at Jerusalem; held regular debates, in which opinions were discussed, facts examined, the testimony of the miracles wrought by the missionaries of the new faith considered, the authority of the prophecies appealed to, and determinations formed from a combined view of

^h Left my argument here should be misunderstood, I wish it to be observed, that I do not infer that the apostles were free from enthusiasm, merely because they formed societies, in which, as they extended, some degree of connection with the original society, was maintained, and their own authority as founders of that society preserved, for something like this has been frequently done by enthusiasts; no—I argue from the *order*, the *good sense*, and the *prudence* displayed in the constitution and the government of this society, which I conceive enthusiasts would not have observed.

¹ Vid. Acts xv. the 30 first verses. xxi. from 17 to 26. Also Acts vi. 1 to 8—20—17th.

all

all these various circumstances; which determinations were reduced to writing, authenticated by the names of the apostles, and elders, and brethren, and conveyed by a regular deputation from them to the different churches, for whose use they were designed; by whom these determinations were received as final and decisive. Now, may we not with full confidence assert, that such deliberation and order, as this system of regulation displays, was as inconsistent with the wild and levelling fury of enthusiasm, as reason is inconsistent with frenzy, or good government with anarchy and misrule? Surely then, such a system could never have originated with, or been at all maintained by senseless fanatics.

SECTION III.

The wisdom and sobriety of mind which the apostles displayed, in the general government of the church, particularly exemplified in their conduct as to the circumcision of the Gentiles.

THE important * question, “whether the Gentiles converted to Christianity, should be also obliged to obey the Mosaic law,” was a subject which

* Vid. Acts xv. the first thirty-four verses.

affected the most deep-rooted prejudices, and roused the strongest passions of every Jewish mind, on which some of the very chief of the apostles seem to have been divided, if not in opinion, yet in some circumstances of their conduct, and to have¹ expressed this difference of sentiment with considerable^m warmth. This was therefore a case in which, if the folly and the violence of enthusiasm had existed, it would have been almost to a certainty displayed. But if in this instance order and reason, truth and soberness, prevailed, we are, I think, warranted in concluding, that these were the leading principles which uniformly directed, not only the apostles, but the great body of the primitive Christian church.

¹ Gal. ii. 11 and 12 verses.

^m These differences have sometimes been alledged as a decisive objection against the divine authority of the Christian scheme, but surely without cause. The New Testament nowhere represents the apostles as infallible or impeccable; it has drawn ONE and ONLY ONE PERFECT character, that of their divine LORD; but Christianity derives more strength of evidence from the impartiality with which its historians relate their own and their brethrens occasional errors or faults, than it can suffer injury from any imputation which their conduct may seem to justify. Another signal advantage from the relation of these divisions is, that it affords the strongest evidence, that the whole scheme was founded on truth, not imposture; for whenever impostors, and these the very chief conductors of the imposition, fall into contention and dispute, the fallacy is inevitably detected. Not so with the gospel; though its teachers might in some points for some short time disagree, these disagreements impeded not in the least the completion of their sacred work—for this was conducted by the hand of God.

Now

Now in order to prove that the apostolic decree pronounced on this occasion was dictated by reason and sobriety, it does not seem necessary to enter into any minute discussion of the different opinions which have been advanced, as to its precise meaning; it is sufficient to observe, that in whatever sense it is taken, it bears the clearest marks of such prudent attention to the peace and welfare of the church, and such charitable condescension to the prejudices of the well-meaning, as evidently shews its authors were not impetuous, overbearing fanatics.

If we take the word *Gentiles* in its obvious sense, to mean all equally, whether devout proselytes or idolatrous Gentiles, and consider the restrictions from "meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication," as addressed to *all* Gentile converts, we shall find abundant reasons for these prohibitions, from the close connection between these practices and ° idolatry.

Participation of the meats either offered in the Pagan temples, or avowedly consecrated to the Pagan gods, would naturally seem a tacit acquiescence in

^a Acts xv. 20, 21, and 29.

^o That this was the true reason, why the practices mentioned in this decree were forbidden, is supported with very strong arguments by the learned SPENCER, in his dissertation on Acts xv. 20. annexed to his second book de Legibus Hebræorum ritualibus, vol. i. p. 434. edit. 2.

the worship of these base idols, would necessarily offend the scrupulous Christian, and might perhaps seduce the yet unsteady profelyte.—The use of blood, and therefore of things strangled to retain the blood, was conceived by the Heathens to be one mode of ^p holding communication with the invisible dæmons whom they adored ; and every conceivable ^q abomination of impurity was perpetrated by the worshippers of those foul and vicious monsters, whom what has been termed the ^r “ *elegant Mythology of the Greeks,*” had exalted into gods, in the very temples of these gods, in imitation of their actions, in honour of their memory ; nay, as parts of their worship. Hence this last, though *naturally* so much superior in its guilt, was, in this view, forbidden, together with the former indulgencies, as the worst companion of idolatry, and the strongest temptation to it.

Another reason for uniting these prohibitions may be found in the prejudices of the Jews, in whose law these various practices had been forbidden ^s *together*, and who held them in such abhorrence, that they could not converse freely, or even participate at the table of the Lord with those who used *any* of them,

^p Vid. Spencer ut Supra, p. 451, and Patrick on Leviticus, xix. 26.

^q Vid. Spencer, ib. p. 451.

^r Vid. Gibbon's *History of the Roman Empire*, vol. ii. ch. v.

^s Vid. Leviticus xvii. and xviii. with Patrick's Commentary ; also Leviticus xix. verse 26. ib.

and would not believe any who persevered in one of them to be sincere converts from Paganism ; perhaps also, in order to consult the peace of the church, by not offending the prejudices of the over-scrupulous Jews, the fornication here forbidden may have extended, not only to prevent every species of impurity in general, but particularly to prevent marriage within those degrees of consanguinity in which it was prohibited by the Levitical law.

In this view all these prohibitions may have been necessary, under the circumstances then existing ; and whenever these circumstances should cease to exist, by the abolition of the Jewish polity, and the general disuse of Heathen idolatry, Christians could be at no loss to distinguish between the *temporary* obligation to abstain from meats offered to idols, from blood, and things strangled, and the *eternal obligation* to abstain from every species of impurity. Their Lord had expressly marked out this important distinction, “ not that which entereth into the mouth “ defileth a man, but that which cometh out, even “ from the heart ; for out of the heart proceed evil

‘ Matt. xv. 10 to 20. That all such observances are in themselves indifferent, and compliance with them inculcated merely for the sake of avoiding offence and disunion, is beautifully illustrated by the apostle Paul. Vid. the epistle to the Romans, the xivth. ch. and beginning of the xvth. and in the 1st. Corinthians, viiith. and xth. chapters, to which I refer the readers, and which will be more particularly considered when we come to consider the moral doctrines of the apostles.

thoughts

" thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, " false witness, blasphemies ; these are they which " defile a man"; but to eat with unwashen hands (*and on the same ground to eat in any manner prohibited by the Levitical law*) defileth not a man.

If on the other hand we adopt the " opinion of those who confine the obligation of this decree to such of the Gentiles as had been previously converted from idolatry, and had embraced the worship of the true God, as taught by the Jewish religion, without however adopting circumcision, and its other burthenfome ceremonies, another reason for these prohibitions

" This opinion is supported by most respectable authorities, vid. Lord Barrington's *Miscellanea Sacra*, vol. ii. p. 255. London 1770 ; his essay on the apostolic decree. Dr. Benson's *History of Christianity*, b. iii. ch. iii. sect. 4, 5, and 6. and Dr. McKnight in his preface to the epistle to the Galatians, sect. 4. vol. iii. p. 220. of that edition, consisting of four volumes. One of the grand arguments used by these learned writers, viz. " that if this decree was directed to the profelytes from amongst the idolatrous Gentiles, it is still binding on all Christians in every part of it," seems to me inconclusive: the necessity of abstaining from meats offered to idols, and from things strangled, and from blood, arose from these being parts of idolatrous worship, or at least so connected with it, as to afford occasion of suspicion and offence to the Jewish profelytes, and to all weaker Christians ; (vid. Spencer, and the passages cited from St. Paul) consequently, where idolatrous worship has wholly ceased, and no such ground for suspicion and offence can possibly exist, these prohibitions lose their force, and the use of things strangled, and of blood, becomes, what it is in its own nature, a matter of indifference ; but I perfectly agree with these learned writers in the sentiment quoted in my text.

arises

arises from the *political* privileges to which these devout Gentiles (or *proselytes of the gate*, as they were termed) were entitled, under the Jewish state, viz. a liberty of settling or sojourning in Palestine, frequenting the Jewish synagogues, offering sacrifices in the temples, and enjoying the cities of refuge—privileges which required on their part the observance of these prohibitions, as a test not only of their religious, but their political obedience, and which the gospel could not free them from so long as the Jewish polity continued, and these privileges were claimed under it ; for Christianity in no case interfered with the political situation, or affected the civil duties or rights of any of its converts. * “ Hence the apostles themselves obeyed “ the Jewish law, and advised the converts from “ amongst the Jews, and the devout proselytes, to “ continue to do the same, not as a necessary condition of salvation, but merely as a matter of political obligation.”

Such was the general substance of the decree, which evidently steers a wise medium between the violent partizans of the opposite opinions ; securing the perpetual freedom of Christians in general from the burthen of the Mosaic law, but carefully guarding against the seductions of idolatry, or at least yielding to the violent prejudices of the Jews, and the political connection of the devout Gentiles with the Jewish

* M'Knight as quoted above, p. 227.

state, so far as to inculcate the observance of such of the Levitical precepts as could not be disregarded without interrupting the harmony of the church, so long as these prejudices and that connection continued to exist. Surely such a decree was not dictated by an extravagant and senseless fanaticism.

But besides the general nature of the decree, if we observe the *manner* in which it was conveyed, this also displays the same prudent and vigilant attention to the peace of the church.

The advocates for the observance of the Jewish law had violently opposed Barnabas and Paul, and probably calumniated them as preaching a gospel different from that taught by the original apostles of Christ. The preamble of the decree, without directly rebuking these misguided zealots, obviates the ill effect of their misrepresentations, by describing Paul and Barnabas as “ the beloved brethren who “ had hazarded their lives for the name of the “ Lord Jesus Christ ;” but if these apostles *alone* had been the bearers of the decree, their opposers might perhaps have raised some suspicion of its authenticity and strict correctness ; the council therefore sent with them two other preachers, of signal reputation and piety, Judas and Silas, who had never been engaged in the contest, and would there-

fore be unsuspected vouchers of the sentence pronounced to decide it.

Finally, it is not, I think, possible to read over this decree, without admiring the humility and moderation of its conclusion; it enumerates the prohibitions already stated, and closes with these words, " * from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well; fare ye well." How different this from the high strains of priestly arrogance and papal usurpation in the corrupted ages of the church; or the bitter invectives of angry reformers, and the wild rants of heated enthusiasts, in more modern days? how conformable to that mild and sober dignity we should expect in men speaking the dictates of genuine inspiration, and following the example of their meek and humble Lord?

Another remarkable circumstance, connected with this transaction, here presents itself to our consideration, which seems to supply an additional proof of the great discretion and good sense, as well as the love of peace and harmony which regulated the conduct of the apostles. They had, as was remarked, determined that the Gentiles converted to Christianity were under no obligation to subject themselves to the burthen of the entire Mosaic law; but they had also determined, that the Jews who

* Acts xv. 29.

embraced

embraced the gospel, might, if they pleased, *retain* the observance of that law, which from their infancy they had been habituated to revere, because, though not *necessary*, yet neither was it *inconsistent* with Christianity.—Now this distinction was certainly most just and rational; but it was also such a distinction as fanatics never would have made, and the conduct observed in consequence of this distinction was strikingly consonant to the spirit from whence it originated.

St. Paul, the zealous and successful disseminator of the gospel through the wide extent of the Heathen world, returned, after a period of several years, to Jerusalem; he visits the apostle James, who remained there, and then presided over the Jewish church, he was received by him, and all the elders assembled, and declares particularly the wonders which God had wrought amongst the Gentiles by his ministry, and “when they heard it they glorified God.” But while full of joy and exultation at the progress of the gospel, they were not inattentive to the safety of their brother apostle, and the peace of the Jewish Church.—They knew the violence of many of the Jews would be easily roused by those who mistook or misrepresented the conduct of St. Paul, and they intreat the apostle to act in such a manner, as might prevent the mischievous consequences of such an error or calumny; by performing some public acts, which should prove that he even then did not think

it inconsistent with his Christian character to observe the Jewish law; and with this request St. Paul immediately and cheerfully complied, as in this instance his compliance could not injure the cause of Christian liberty, while it avoided offending the prejudices of the over-zealous Jew.

The admirable wisdom and Christian benevolence with which St. Paul conducted himself on this difficult subject, also appears strongly from contrasting his conduct towards two of his favourite converts, and most able assistants, Timotheus and Titus.

The former he prevailed on to submit to circumcision, and obey the Mosaic law; because, as it was known his mother had been a Jewess, his not acting thus would have given occasion of offence. The latter had been a Gentile, and therefore when it was suggested that he also should be circumcised, the apostle steadily refused, lest he should seem to establish a precedent for subjecting the liberty of all the Gentile Christians to the bondage of the law.

Thus admirably did all the apostles act up to those principles, which St. Paul has so beautifully described,
 “ giving none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to
 “ the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, even as
 “ I, says he, please all men in all things; not seeking

Acts xvi. Gal. ii. 3. 1 Cor. x. 32.
 “ mine

“ mine own profit, but the profit of many, that
 “ they may be saved.” Was this enthusiastic delu-
 sion, wild fanaticism, extravagant and ill-directed
 zeal? surely not; no, this was the voice of soberness
 supporting the sacred cause of piety and truth. Let
 us now direct our attention to some more minute,
 but not less convincing proofs, that St. Paul in
 particular was totally uninfluenced by the extra-
 vagance of enthusiasm.

SECTION IV.

*The conduct of St. Paul in particular was not directed
 or influenced by enthusiasm.*

THE conduct of this apostle perpetually displays a
 zeal, ardent indeed, and active, but constantly
 united with the observance of decorum and propriety,
 as well as attention to his reputation and his personal
 safety, so far as was consistent with the discharge of
 his sacred office, and to a much higher degree than
 can possibly be conceived to exist in a mind dis-
 tracted by the frenzy of enthusiasm; a few instances
 will illustrate and prove this position.

‘ When at Philippi he was unjustly scourged and imprisoned, and the discovery of his innocence induced the magistrates to give orders for his immediate, but private enlargement; he is not satisfied with securing his safety, without also *guarding his character*, which was exposed to suspicion and disgrace, from the ignominious treatment he had received; and he uses that motive to procure an honourable dismissal, which alone could excite the attention of the magistrates.—“ They have beaten us (says the apostle) “ openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have “ cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out “ privately; nay, verily, but let them come themselves “ and fetch us out.”—The event justified the expectation of the apostle; for, “ the magistrates feared when they heard they were Romans, and came “ and besought them and brought them out.”

But having thus vindicated their character, they did not attempt to retaliate the ill usage they had received, by public or legal complaint, or to irritate the resentment, and provoke the further vengeance of the magistrates, by obstinate opposition; when desired by them to depart out of the city, they only waited to see the brethren, “ and when they had seen “ them, they comforted them, and departed.”

The apostle displays a similar care of his reputation when he enjoins the ^d Corinthians; “ whomsoever ye

^d Acts xvi. xix. 38.

^d 1 Corin. xvi. 1, 4.

“ shall

" shall approve, by your letters, will I send to bring
 " your liberality to Jerusalem; and if it be meet
 " that I go also, they shall go with me." His reason he states in ^e another address to them, " and we
 " have sent with him, (Titus) the brother, whose
 " praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;
 " and not that only, but who was also chosen of the
 " churches to travel with us, with this grace which
 " is administered by us, to the glory of the Lord,
 " and declaration of your ready mind; *avoiding*
 " *this*, that any man should *blame* us in this *abun-*
 " *dance* which is *administered* by us, *providing* for *ho-*
 " *nest things*, not only in the sight of God, but also in the
 " *sight of men.*"—How remote from enthusiasm
 is such cool precaution as *this*?

And as he guarded his character, so neither did he neglect his safety; true it is, indeed, that no reproaches, no dangers, no punishments, could deter him from preaching the gospel of Christ, when shame and persecution were inevitable in discharging this sacred duty; yet it is equally clear, that he employed all innocent means which reason could suggest, consistent with that duty, to elude the rage of malignant bigotry—but he preached the gospel still.

To escape persecution he fled from ^f Damascus,

^e 2 Corin. viii. 18—21

^f Acts ix. 25.

from ^a Antioch, from ^b Iconium, from ^c Thessalonica ; to avoid being scourged, he pleaded his privilege as a Roman citizen. In a violent ^d tumult at Jerusalem, he preserved himself from instant death, by availing himself, with admirable presence of mind, of the contrariety of opinions which prevailed amongst the different parties of his assailants ; for when he perceived that one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, “ men and “ brethren I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, “ for the hope and resurrection of the dead I am “ called in question ;” and the scribes of the Pharisees arose and said, ^e “ we find no evil in this man ; “ but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let “ us not fight against God.” Thus he gained time to obtain the protection of the civil power. With similar prudence he afterwards escaped the malignity of assassination, by appealing to the tribunal of Cæsar ; “ more than forty ^m Jews bound themselves by a “ curse, that they would neither eat nor drink, till “ they had killed Paul.” The apostle, on discovering the conspiracy, discloses it secretly to the chief captain, whose prisoner he then was, and by a secret removal escapes.

When a similar conspiracy was afterwards ⁿ renewed, and the Jews requested Festus, the governor,

^a Acts xiii. 50.

^b Acts xiv. 16.

^c Acts xvii. 14.

^d Acts xxiii. 6, 7. ^e Acts xxiii. 9. ^m Acts xxiii. 12. ⁿ Acts xxv. 3.

to bring him back to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him, and Festus ° desires the apostle's compliance with this request; how admirably does he, in his reply, guard both his safety and his character? "I stand, (said he) at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged; to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest; for if I have been an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them; I appeal unto Cæsar." How contrary this to the artifice and conscious guilt of imposture on the one side, or the folly of enthusiasm on the other?

At Athens, ° a similar temper of mind is still more conspicuous in the conduct of the apostle; there, when summoned before the august court of Areopagus, to answer to an accusation "of having set forth strange Gods," which their laws pronounced a capital crime, mark his defence—"an impostor, (says Lord Littleton, speaking of this transaction) an impostor would have retracted his doctrine to save his life; an enthusiast would have lost his life without trying to save it by innocent means; St. Paul did neither the one nor the other; he availed himself of an altar, inscribed to the un-

1° Acts xxv. 9. 2° Acts xvii. 16 to 34. Lyttleton on the conversion of St. Paul, p. 47, note.

“ *known God*, and pleaded, that he did not propose
 “ the worship of any new God, but only explained
 “ to the people the nature and attributes of that un-
 “ known Divinity, whom their government had al-
 “ ready received ;” “ *Whom therefore ye ignorantly*
 “ *worship, him declare I unto you ; God who made*
 “ *the world, and all things therein, in whom we live,*
 “ *and move, and have our being.*” “ Thus he eluded
 “ condemnation, without departing in the least
 “ from the truth of the gospel, or violating the
 “ honour of his God ; an admirable proof of the
 “ *good sense* with which he acted, and that there was
 “ no mixture of fanaticism in his religion.”

It is further peculiarly worthy of remark, that in
 all these various trying situations, in which the apostle
 of the Gentiles was placed, we find him observant
 of those decorums of language, and those distinctions
 of rank, which the intercourse of society and the
 preservation of order require, but which the pride
 and violence of fanaticism almost always contemns
 and tramples on,

He is brought before kings and rulers, to bear tes-
 timony to the name of Jesus ;—we see him as at the
 tribunal of the Areopagus at Athens, so also before
 the council of the chief priests at Jerusalem, before
 two different Roman governors, and especially before
 king Agrippa ; and to all he yields that tribute of
 external respect which their external situation de-
 manded,

manded, without departing in the least item from sincerity and truth, or debasing by any mean adulation, or unworthy compliance, the integrity of his character, and the honour of his God. Never does any peevish or passionate, any rude or contemptuous expression escape him. Once, and only once, an unmerited and wanton insult drew from him an indignant reproach against ^a Ananias, who, though he presided as his judge, commanded the infliction of the insult; but the moment he is reminded of the character which Ananias bore—the moment they that stood by said, “revilest thou God’s high priest so?” he apologizes and accounts for his warmth, “brethren, I wist not that he was the high priest, for it is written, thou shalt not speak evil of the rulers of thy people.”

And what is most remarkable, the testimony of history renders probable what the apostle insinuates, that Ananias was not in truth high priest; but that in a period of anarchy, when the office was unfilled, he rashly assumed that character, which by his insolence he disgraced. This single instance excepted, (if indeed thus circumstanced it constitutes an exception) the language and conduct of the apostle was uniformly temperate and decorous, as it was firm and dignified, naturally resulting from piety and so-

^a Acts xiii. 2 to 6.

briety of mind, utterly inconsistent with folly and fanaticism.

I have dwelt more particularly on the character of St. Paul, not only because his history is recorded more fully than that of any of his fellow-labourers; but because the natural warmth of his temper, the unremitting activity of his exertions, the fervor of his piety, and the deep sense he expresses of the infinite importance of the sacred cause in which he was engaged, and his own unworthiness for such an office, are circumstances, all of which seem, to superficial and hasty reasoners, to render the charge of enthusiasm against him more plausible than against any or all of his associates; therefore if it can plainly and briefly be repelled from him, much more is it void of every semblance of reason when urged against any of the remaining apostles.

In truth, I trust, I may confidently appeal to the candid judgment of every one of my readers, whether on reviewing the facts I have related of the apostles' conduct, (and I am not conscious of having omitted any fact of importance) we can possibly believe they were in any degree enthusiasts, if that name implies weakness and folly, heat and violence, error and delusion. Have we not proved that they were free from the melancholy, the abstraction, the austerity, of enthusiasm? that they were ready to labour with their own hands

hands for their support ; attentive to the common relations and duties of life ; careful to preserve regularity, subordination and peace, in the society over which they presided ; perpetually and successfully on their guard against every occurrence which might afford any reasonable ground for suspecting the purity of their intentions, and thus impeding the success of their ministry ; conceding to well-meaning prejudice, as far as concession was allowable ; not inattentive to their safety when their duty did not demand its sacrifice ; considerate and cautious, temperate and decorous, meek and charitable ; utterly remote from the blind precipitance, the outrageous fury, the unyielding obstinacy of enthusiastic minds. In the name of truth and reason, can we in plainness and simplicity of mind assert—nay more—stake our immortal happiness on the truth of the assertion—that men who so lived, and so acted, were either interested, selfish impostors on the one hand, or wild and visionary fanatics on the other, or a mixture of both together—at once artful enough to deceive mankind, and at the same time mad enough to sacrifice themselves, and this, to carry on a deceit, which, instead of being (as some have wickedly and falsely termed it) a *pious fraud*, would have been the most impious and blasphemous imposture, which human imagination can conceive ; exalting a crucified deceiver, a man rejected and abandoned of God, as the Son of God, and judge of the world.—No
surely

surely—such cool art united with such wild fanaticism, is a contradiction in nature—such sacrifices for such a deception, are wholly unparalled and incredible.

CHAPTER IV.

The writings of the apostles and evangelists were free from the characters of enthusiasm, proved in this chapter of the historical works of the New Testament.

SECTION I.

The stile and temper in which the historical works of the New Testament are composed, considered.

IN the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to prove that the apostles and evangelists were free from the two primary and essential characteristics of fanaticism, weak credulity and imperious dogmatism ; I have also traced their conduct, and I trust this has appeared rational, temperate, and meek ; the very reverse of that which the impetuosity of enthusiasm would naturally produce. I now proceed to consider their writings, the stile in which they are composed, the temper of mind which they display, and the facts which they detail ; in all, I trust, we shall perceive “ those things which become sound doctrine,” and evince a divine original.

What

What then are the characters which reason would lead us to expect, and which experience proves generally prevail in the compositions of enthusiasts? In such men the imagination is violently heated, a confusion of ideas ensues, the style becomes forced and obscure, full of mysterious and metaphorical, dark and distorted allusions; with this obscurity is most frequently combined an exaggerated and extravagant strain of thought and expression; nothing is attributed to natural causes; every thing is spiritualized and magnified; common events are described as secret providences, uncommon as decided miracles: but neither the obscurity nor the exaggeration of enthusiasm are so conspicuous or so offensive, as the heat and violence, the arrogance and bitterness, which are too frequently found in such men as conceive themselves to be the only favourites of heaven, and pronounce the rest of mankind to be alienated from, and offensive to God; and who naturally betray this self-exaltation and uncharitableness by a strain of affected humility, and real ostentation, by overbearing dogmatism and virulent invective.

Thus obscurity and extravagance, self-exaltation and uncharitableness, are the natural characters of enthusiastic compositions. Now compare these with the style of the historical works of the New Testament, and the contrast is surely most clear and decisive. In these compositions simplicity of style and structure, and its attendant perspicuity, form the leading

leading features ; every thing is clear, unforced, unadorned ; the sentences are short and intelligible ; the language plain and natural ; no superfluous or far-fetched epithets—no accumulation of synonymous, or nearly synonymous words, to amplify or impress the ideas of the speaker—no involved circumlocutions—no effort to express things in a bold, emphatical manner. This simplicity of stile and structure is essentially connected with, and evidently arises from the simplicity of the design. The writers of these narrations appear solely “ as Christ’s humble attendants, selected for introducing to the knowledge of others this infinitely higher character, who is himself in a pre-eminent sense, the mouth, and the oracle of God ;” it is this subordinate part which they professedly and uniformly act. Struck with the ineffable dignity of the Messiah whom they serve, they lose no opportunity of exhibiting him to the world, and appear to consider the introduction of their own opinions, conjectures or reasonings, unless where they make a part of the narration, as an impertinence ; they sink themselves in order to place him in the most conspicuous point of view ; they preach not themselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord. Hence in the historical part of the New Testament, we never find the least trace of any attempt to shine by studied expression, composition, or

^r Vid. Dr. George Campbell’s preliminary dissertation to his translation of the gospels, in 2 vols. 4to. Lond. 1789—vol. 1st. 3d dissertation, § 4, p. 66, § 18, p. 82, and § 24, p. 95.

sentiment ;

sentiment; plainness of language is always preferred, because the best adapted to all capacities, though in a style by no means slovenly, yet in little points, as about those grammatical accuracies, which do not affect the meaning and perspicuity of the sentence, rather careless than curious. In this sort of simplicity our Lord's biographers peculiarly excel; and surely this is very opposite to the turgid and obscure productions of a mind inflated and confused by fanaticism.

But the turn of thought and expression, is not only clear and intelligible, but in the highest degree moderate and calm; so far from exaggerating trifles into importance, and indulging the extravagancies of enthusiasm, that the most striking displays of wisdom, the most engaging exertions of beneficence, calculated to rouse the warmest admiration and gratitude, are related with perfect coolness, without any marks of wonder, or exclamations of sympathy: nay further, the most stupendous exertions of miraculous power—the course of nature suspended—all manner of diseases healed by a word—the winds and waves controuled by their master's voice; and even the depths of the grave yielding back the dead to life at his command. Events such as these, the history of which we cannot peruse without astonishment, which seem necessarily to call forth the strongest expressions of wonder and reverence, the boldest flights of enraptured eloquence; even these are related as coolly

as

as the most common occurrences, laid before the reader with all their minutest circumstances, but laid before him briefly and plainly, without any attempt to magnify their greatness or their consequences.

The same calmness of mind is equally conspicuous in the unimpassioned, but not unfeeling manner in which the evangelists relate the cruel sufferings of their divine Lord, as well as the obstinacy, the perverseness, the insatiable malignity of his enemies; in all their narration, not one opprobrious epithet, not one severe expression escapes them; can any thing more strongly distinguish them from fanatics, whose fury and hatred perpetually burst forth, when roused by opposition of any kind, much more when such opposition inflicts the severest personal injuries, and pursues with contempt and persecution the most sacred objects of religious reverence? Such calmness, rarely, if ever attained by philosophic wisdom, is surely utterly inconsistent with fanaticism.

On this subject it has been well observed by a judicious writer, "that as you find in the works of the apostles and evangelists no inconsistent ravings, nothing of the madness or extravagance of enthusiasm, so neither do you find any bold high expressions, importing indecent familiarity with the

¹ Dr. McKnight, in his truth of the gospel history, 4to. p. 427.

“ Divinity, no bitter invectives against the religion
 “ of the country where they preached, no abusive
 “ language of persons or things deemed sacred, no
 “ proud exaltation of their own merits, no indignant
 “ reprobation of their countrymen, who had rejected
 “ and crucified their divine Lord, and still opposed
 “ his religion and persecuted his followers; no dis-
 “ regard and contempt of the rest of mankind for
 “ blindness and idolatry.” They declare, indeed,
 that all mankind labour under sin; they call men
 every where to repent; and proclaim Christ Jesus, as
 the only name under heaven by which men can be
 saved; but these sacred truths are delivered, not with
 pride and arrogance, but with the deepest humility
 and self-abasement; and we find them all disclaiming
 all power and holiness of their own, not once only,
 and merely for form sake, but repeatedly, and from
 the heart.

On this subject an observation has been made,
 which though somewhat refined and minute, seems
 just and important, and peculiarly illustrates that
 calmness and candour, which, it is contended, repel
 from the evangelists all suspicion of their being ac-
 tuated by the heat and violence of fanaticism. It is
 this, that our Lord's biographers seldom bring for-

* Vid. Dr. G. Campbell, as quoted above, dissertation iii.
 sect. 22. p. 87 to 90. This learned writer carries the observa-
 tion farther than I do: so far as it is necessary for my argu-
 ment, its justice will not, I trust, seem doubtful.

ward

ward the names of those of whom they can mention nothing but to their disgrace, except when there seems to be some necessity for thus particularly marking them out, in order to authenticate some parts of the history in which these persons were materially concerned. Thus, in the gospels, the names of the high priests, the Tetrarch of Galilee, the Roman governor, and the treacherous disciple, are all that are particularly mentioned of those who were active in the prosecution and death of our Lord ; and in the Acts, none are particularly named who were engaged in the persecution of the Christians, except some of the Roman magistrates, the kings Agrippa and Herod, the high priest Ananias, and the orator Tertullus—all of whom, from their high rank or other circumstances, were the most distinguished actors in the events recorded, whose names could not have been wholly suppressed, without stripping the history of those particulars, which at this day form the strongest marks of its authenticity and truth.

Thus also we can account for the particular mention made of the crimes of Ananias, and Sapphira, and Elymas, because these persons were themselves the subjects of signal miraculous interferences, which would have lost much of their credibility, had they been related merely in general terms, without specifying the occasions which gave rise to them, and the individuals on whom they had been wrought.

These instances excepted, the evangelists seem uniformly rather to suppress than to particularize names, when what truth compels them to say is to the disadvantage of the persons. Thus, they omit the name of the officer who smote our Lord on the face at his trial, adding insult to cruelty and injustice; of the false witnesses against him; of the malefactor who upbraided him while hanging on the cross. Thus also in the Acts, those who first disputed with " Stephen, and afterwards suborned false witnesses to take away his life; the * forty Jews who conspired to assassinate Paul, are all passed by without specification.— Now it is most evident, that this conduct in our Lord's historians did not arise from a fear of making enemies. The unvaried steadiness of their preaching, and the noble firmness of their martyrdom, supply proofs of fortitude too clear to be disputed; and the same spirit appears even in the circumstances now alluded to, for they have in fact named most of those who were possessed of such an authority, or actuated by such a disposition, as could render their resentment an object of terror; no, their reserve was evidently in the true spirit of their divine Master. They do not, without some evident necessity, bring forward the names of those whom they must mention only to disgrace; they direct our contempt and hatred against the crimes, not the persons of men; against the vices not against the vicious. Aware that this last direction

" Acts vi. 9.

* Acts xxiii. 12.

would be of the most dangerous tendency to genuine charity, they shew no disposition to hold up any man to the Christians of their own time as an object either of their fear or their abhorrence, or to transmit his name with infamy to posterity ;—while on the contrary they cheerfully particularize those to whose faith and gratitude, love and piety, they can bear honourable testimony, thus to excite a noble emulation.

Still more strongly to evince the candour and impartiality of the sacred writers, qualities so inconsistent with the violence and presumption of enthusiasm, it is worthy of remark, that they not only never load their enemies with any opprobrious epithets, but that they sometimes speak of them in honourable and respectful terms. Thus at Antioch, in Pisidia, when the Jews raised such a persecution against Paul as to drive him from the city, the inhabitants whom they prevailed on to join in this persecution are spoken of, not with abuse or bitterness, but *“ as devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city.”* The title of philosopher is not denied to those Athenians who spoke of Paul as a babbler, and dragged him, as a violator of the laws, before the court of Areopagus ; and the priests and rulers who were most active in the persecution of the apostles, are always denoted by the honourable titles

7 Acts xiv. 50.

which

which officially belonged to them, without any remark on the depravity of their personal character, or its inconsistency with their official duty.

The strongest proof of the candour and humility of the sacred writers, is however found in the manner in which they speak of their own characters, and their own weaknesses and faults; here all is open and undisguised; no secret is made of the names or the transgressions of any of the apostles; the slowness of their understanding, their prejudices and bigotry, their temporal views and contentions for power, their desertion of their divine Master in the hour of distress, the accidental differences which occurred in the course of their ministry, are all fully and plainly related. The crime of Peter in denying his Lord, and that of Paul in his bitter persecution of the church, are not suppressed, though their reputation must have seemed so essential to the Christian cause, and their transitory, though great offences, were followed by a whole life of penitence.—Not to multiply instances, enough surely has been said, to shew that the historians of the New Testament were wholly free from the heat, and bigotry, and presumption, which so generally characterise fanaticism. Let me not, however, be understood to assert, that the evangelists never speak of offenders with severity; far otherwise. I am well aware, there are instances which may seem exceptions to the general principles I have endeavoured to establish; but I am confident
a little

a little attention will prove they *only seem* to be exceptions, but that in reality they confirm the truth of these principles; because in every instance where this severity occurs, it is evidently, not only justified, but almost extorted by the nature of the crime which they rebuke; and it is remarkable, that almost every offender thus rebuked, displays that peculiar species of character, on which mildness and mercy would be as ineffectual, as it would certainly be unmerited; even an hypocritical and mercenary mind, which resists the conviction of truth from sordid worldly views, or abuses the sacred name of religion, to conceal and sanctify malignity or avarice. Such was the general character of the Pharisees, against whom alone their mild and benevolent Lord had poured forth keen and indignant reproach; and such were the individuals whom the apostles loaded with well-merited condemnation. ^a Ananias and Sapphira, whom avarice, united with hypocrisy, and a secret contempt for that divine Authority which they professed to obey, tempted to lie, not unto men, but unto God, experienced a severe but just punishment. ^a Simon, who had employed the base frauds of sorcery to delude the Samaritans to bestow divine honours on himself, and who preserved the same audacious impiety, even after he had pretended to embrace the pure religion of the gospel, offering the apostles money to purchase the power of the Holy Ghost,

^a Acts v.^a Acts viii.

well deserved the severe rebuke of St Peter ; “ thy
 “ money perish with thee, because thou hast thought
 “ the gift of God could be purchased with money ;
 “ thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for
 “ thy heart is not right with God ; repent there-
 “ fore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if
 “ perhaps the thought of thine heart may be for-
 “ given, for I perceive thou art in the gall of bitter-
 “ ness, and the bond of iniquity.”

^b Elymas, a man of a similar character, for he also
 was a forcerer, withstood the preaching of St. Paul,
 seeking (doubtless from selfish motives) to turn away
 the Roman governor from the faith ; his malignant
 and interested opposition wrung from the apostle the
 severest rebuke which he ever pronounced ; but its
 justice was attested by the miraculous blindness which
 divine Power enabled him to inflict : thus the occa-
 sional severity of the apostles was wholly free from
 the violence of enthusiasm ; it was dictated by truth
 and approved by heaven.

But, except in these instances, we perceive, that
 on the most trying occasions the apostles imitate the
 unexampled benignity of their divine Lord, who, in
 the agonies of death, prayed for his murderers,
 “ Father forgive them, for they know not what
 “ they do.” The apostles also alledge this the only
 extenuation of their enemies guilt, which the eye of

^b Acts xiii.

mercy could trace—"Ye denied the holy one, says
 " St. Peter, and desired a murderer to be granted
 " to you, and killed the Prince of Life; and now,
 " brethren, I wot that *through ignorance* ye did it,
 " as did also your rulers; but those things which
 " God before had shewed by the mouth of all his
 " prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so
 " fulfilled; repent ye therefore and be converted,
 " that your sins may be blotted out."—Such is the
 whole tenor of their stile; and surely this is very
 opposite to the fury of enflamed enthusiasm.

SECTION II.

The facts of the evangelic history considered.

FROM the stile and thought let us turn to the facts recorded by the evangelists. We know the sort of facts on which enthusiasts dwell with peculiar complacency, having no others to produce in support of their divine authority. They generally abound, like the history of Mahomet, with the accounts of nocturnal visions, in which the authors are admitted to an immediate converse with angels, nay, even the Deity himself, and behold the glories of other worlds, which

• Acts iii. 17.

they

they minutely and rapturously describe. Sometimes, like the priestesses of old, overpowered by the supposed influence of their God, in the dark recesses of their temples; or, like the devotees, prostrate at the tombs of modern saints, their inspiration is displayed by convulsions and agitations, which, when numbers are collected, pass like an electric shock from soul to soul; sometimes like the celebrated Lord Herbert (the first patron of the deistical scheme in modern days) when wound up to the height of devotion, they mistake the voice of a still small wind as a voice from God; they receive answers to their prayers in raptures and extacies, secret whispers and sudden illuminations, which have no connection with any ascertainable facts, and preclude the possibility of either proof or confutation.

Such are the circumstances which almost universally form the subject of enthusiastic details. Now compare with these the plain facts, the sensible open miracles of the gospel history. Throughout the four evangelists not one vision to any of the writers is so much as mentioned; angels indeed are said to have appeared at our Saviour's birth and resurrection, and some other occasions, when their interposition was necessary to execute some important purpose by their supernatural aid, or to convey glad tidings of great joy to all mankind. But these appearances are delivered clearly and plainly, and verified by the whole series of subsequent events. Voices from heaven are also

also said to have been heard; but they are all at open day, twice in the presence of multitudes.—First, at the baptism of our Lord by John, when his divine character was solemnly proclaimed by a voice from heaven; and again, when the application of some ^d Grecians to be admitted to his presence, prefigured the diffusion of his kingdom to the remotest ends of the earth: a similar voice is related to have been heard, in the presence of three disciples, when our Lord, ^e on the Mount, appeared to them in the anticipated glory of his heavenly majesty. In the Acts only two visions are related, not accompanied by any miraculous fact, ^f one calling Paul to preach in Macedonia; and the other, that which appeared to Peter, to prepare him for communicating to the Roman, ^g Cornelius, the knowledge of the gospel; and thus breaking down that wall of partition which had so long divided the heathen world from the chosen people of God, one of the most important steps in the promulgation of the Christian scheme; and this vision is as fully attested as its importance requires, being three times repeated, confirmed by a correspondent vision to Cornelius himself, and connected with the whole series of subsequent events.—If the apostles are frequently said to have been determined by the Spirit how they should act, and where they should go, such assertions are vindicated from the charge of enthusiasm, by comparing them

^d John xii. 27.^e Matt. xvii.^f Acts xvi.^g Acts x.

with

with the decisive manifestations of the same spirit in the miracles it enabled them to perform, and the success which such miracles only were adequate to obtain.

To conclude this view of the facts which constitute the subject of the gospel history, I would peculiarly call the attention of my reader to the consideration of one grand object which pervades and connects the whole, and which seems sufficient of itself to prove that this history could not have been the production of enthusiasts—I mean the CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF CHRIST JESUS. In whatever view we consider this unparalleled, this divine Character, we cannot believe it possible, that if it never had existed enthusiasts would have been able to invent it; or even if it had existed, to describe it undebased by any mixture of their own folly and extravagance.—Without attempting to delineate all the features of this consummate character, let me point out a few which seem most inconsistent with the supposition of its having been invented or described by any fanatic.

It is then not difficult to prove that the character and conduct of Christ united all the apparently inconsistent qualities, which the Jewish prophets declared should belong to the Messiah, while they excluded every quality which the worldly minds of the warm and bigotted Jews had led them to expect. Now could wild and senseless fanatics have been able, even in a
fictitious

fictitious character, to maintain a coincidence so exact and natural, but at the same time so unthought of, and unexpected, and this through such a variety of particulars apparently so discordant? would they have described the Messiah as of the royal house of David, of the tribe of Judah, and born in Bethlehem, yet the reputed son of a carpenter, brought forth and nurtured in poverty, and so long resident in Nazareth, as to be stigmatized by the title of Nazareth and Galilean? ^a Would enthusiasts have described him as appearing, when only twelve years old, in the temple, amidst the most learned teachers and doctors of the synagogue, and astonishing them by his understanding and answers; yet for eighteen years after making no further display of his supernatural wisdom or power, but remaining subject unto his parents till the due period came for commencing his ministry, and manifesting forth his glory by public miracles? Would enthusiasts have described him as acting with a dignity suitable to the spiritual king of Israel, and the Son of God, and yet appearing humble and poor, not having where to lay his head, despised and rejected of men?—Would enthusiasts have described him as exhibiting in his doctrines, and his works, the clearest proofs of his being the expected Messiah, and on safe occasions, and to fit persons plainly, declaring his claim to that character; yet to the chief priests and Pharisees, who had formed false concep-

^a Vid. Supra, ch. i. § 3.

tions of the Messiah, declining to answer by what authority he acted, and what office he bore, and keeping back all direct assertions of his high dignity, when such open claim would have exposed his intentions, and his religion to calumny and misrepresentation.—In fine, would enthusiasts have described him as confining his personal instructions, and during his own life the instructions of his disciples, to the house of Israel? yet declaring, that the effect of introducing his religion would be, “¹ that the kingdom of God should be taken from them, and “given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof;” and, at his ascension, commanding his disciples to go forth and baptize in all nations.

Not to pursue further particulars, it seems most evident, that the caution and wisdom, the enlarged views and unvaried consistency of our Saviour’s conduct, so admirably adapted to the unprecedented character in which he appeared, and the critical circumstances in which he was placed, were such as weak and visionary fanatics could neither have invented or described; still less can we suppose, that such men would have been competent to delineate from their own disordered imaginations a MORAL CHARACTER such as that of Jesus; a character displaying piety the most fervent, without any mixture of mysticism or extravagance; manners most strict

¹ Matt. xxi. 43.

and pure, but neither unfociable or austere; patriotism and friendship, untinctured by narrow prejudice or weak partiality; the deepest abhorrence of guilt and the warmest zeal for reformation, combined with the most considerate indulgence to frailty, and the most heartfelt pity to offenders; a character, in which frankness and discretion, dignity and meekness, fortitude and tenderness, exquisite sensibility and patient resignation, were so blended and tempered together in the composition of his heavenly mind, that while the most close searching wisdom cannot but confess the spotless perfection of this great example, the humblest virtue may aspire to its imitation, with a full assurance, that the effort is as certainly suited to the weakness of human nature, as it is evidently conducive to its perfection and happiness, and plainly conformable to the divine command.

Now, is it conceivable, that weak extravagant enthusiasts could have conceived such a character as this? nay further, does not the *manner in which this character discovers itself to us*, appear as inconsistent with such a supposition as the character itself? Would enthusiasts have been able to draw such a character, not merely by descriptions and words, but by a long narration of facts, and repetition of discourses naturally and regularly connected, perpetually arising from, and illustrative of each other, involving a constant reference to times, places, and persons,

persons, and bearing every possible mark of reality, and these related with the most perfect calmness and coolness, as well as with the artless simplicity and assured confidence of truth?

I trust it has thus been shewn that the sacred records of the New Testament contain, in their stile and structure, in the spirit they breath, and the facts they detail, strong marks of their undoubted truth, and their divine original.

CHAPTER V.

SECTION I.

*The Epistles of St. Paul were not dictated by enthusiasm ;
their obscurity is considered in this section.*

IN the last chapter I have examined the historical works of the New Testament ; and it has, I trust, appeared, that they are entirely free from those characters which the details of enthusiasts almost universally exhibit. The perspicuity, and the calmness of style, in which they are composed—the consistency, the importance, and the very nature of the facts they detail—and above all, the meek and merciful spirit which they breathe, totally repel every suspicion that those sacred narrations were dictated by fanaticism : but it cannot be denied that the epistles of St. Paul do not so evidently repel a similar suspicion. In many passages they display an obscurity and warmth, which have been imputed, with some plausibility, to the mysticism and the violence of an enthusiastic mind.

It shall therefore be the subject of this chapter to enquire, whether the degree of obscurity and warmth, found in these epistles, may not be fully accounted for, without obliging us to impute them to fanaticism; and whether, in the same writings, we may not discover such clear traces of strong reasoning, sober judgment, and even of refined address, as may fully satisfy us, that the great apostle of the Gentiles, however animated and zealous, was very far removed from extravagance and enthusiasm.

One cause of obscurity there is, which though in a certain degree common to all the writings of the New Testament, must affect those parts which like the epistles of St. Paul, are principally employed in expounding the doctrines of Christianity, more than those which are, for the most part, details of facts.—This was the necessity, not only of alluding to a variety of laws and customs at that time familiar to all, but obscure to us who live in so remote a region, and at so distant an age, but also the necessity of employing many Greek words, in a sense very different from that which they bore in Heathen authors.

It is the observation of Mr. * Locke, “ that the “ subjects treated of in these epistles, are so wholly

* Mr. Locke's preface to his commentary on the Galatians, paragraph the 3d. vol. the 3d. of his works, page 100—6th edit. in 3 vol. folio, Lond. 1759.

“ new, and the doctrines contained in them so perfectly remote from the notions that mankind had been previously acquainted with, that most of the important terms in them have quite a different signification from what they bear in other discourses.”

It is, indeed, 'obvious that Greek, in what is termed its classical purity, could not furnish words to convey just ideas of religious subjects, especially where the Christian dispensation contained doctrines entirely new, or such as were derived from the Jewish religion, to be explained only by a reference to the doctrines and the rites of the Mosaic law, or the writings of the Jewish prophets; hence the writers of the New Testament were compelled to borrow their expressions from the law and the prophets; to employ Greek words, whose meaning would be determined, rather by their analogy to the Hebrew terms, to which they most nearly corresponded, than by their original derivation; and to combine them according to the idioms of the Hebrew and Syriac languages, rather than the natural construction of Grecian phraseology: but surely the obscurity which may arise from this cause, bears no resemblance to that which attends the mysticism of incoherent fanatics.

¹ Vid. Dr. Macknight, in his general preface to his new translation of St. Paul's epistles, § 3—vol. 1. p. 26, of the edition in 4 vols.

It is, indeed, peculiarly worthy of remark, that this is one of the many instances in which those very circumstances, which the rashness of infidelity has presumed to arraign, as inconsistent with the supposition of a divine interference in the promulgation of Christianity, are found, on sober enquiry, to contribute materially to strengthen the evidence of those facts, on which the proof of that interference depends.

Thus, in the present case, if we suppose this cause of obscurity in the sacred writings, removed by the total absence of all Hebrew and Syriac phrases and idioms, and that the divine Spirit, which actuated the apostles and evangelists, had suffered no phrase to drop from them, which did not conform to the strictest purity of the Grecian dialect, as some^m scorers have required it should; what would be the effect (other circumstances remaining the same?) undoubtedly we should lose the very “Christ and
“ principal mark of authenticity in the New Testament,” even its language. This, as the celebrated Michaelis observes, is “distinguished by Hebraisms
“ and Syriacisms, which afford the strongest presumption in its favour, as they shew it to have been
“ written by men of Hebrew origin, a production
“ therefore of the first century; since, after the de-

^m Lord Shaftsbury in his characteristics.

ⁿ Vid. Michaelis's introduction to the New Testament, translated by Marsh, chap. ii. § 10. vol. 1. p. 45.

“ cease

“ cease of the first Jewish converts to Christianity,
 “ we find hardly any instance of Jews who turned
 “ preachers of the gospel, and the Christian fathers
 “ were, for the most part, totally ignorant of He-
 “ brew. This distinguishing mark is to be found
 “ in all the books of the New Testament, though in
 “ different degrees, even in the epistles of St. Paul,
 “ and the Acts of the apostles; though the former
 “ sufficiently evince that the author was master of
 “ the Greek, and the latter contains various exam-
 “ ples, not only of pure, but elegant language; nor
 “ have these idioms the appearance of art or design,
 “ being exactly such as might be expected from per-
 “ sons, who used a language spoken indeed where
 “ they lived, but not the dialect of their country.”

But to this eminent writer himself I refer my reader, for further illustration of this important argument. It is sufficient, for my present purpose, to observe, that the obscurity from this cause must peculiarly affect St. Paul's epistles, because the subject they treat of, were very frequently connected with the Jewish religion; and still more, because several of these epistles were designed principally for the perusal of the Jews. Thus, the whole epistle to the Galatians, the argumentative part of the epistle to the Romans, many passages in the epistles to the Corinthians, the Colossians, and the Philippians, to Timo-

thy and Titus, are employed in discussing the controversy, concerning the obligation of the Mosaic law on the converts to Christianity, or in reprehending and calming the dissensions it had raised. If we add the epistle to the Hebrews, this is principally occupied in explaining the priesthood and intercession of Christ, by its analogy to the Jewish priesthood and worship. Hence the language which the apostle would naturally use, was also best adapted to his purpose—" ^p born at Tarsus, his native language was " Greek; but being a Jew, and accustomed from " his childhood to read the Septuagint translation, " from the Old Testament into Greek, it was na- " tural to suppose, his language would be tinged " by Hebraisms—nor has he ever studied to avoid " the air of a Jew or a Cilician; indeed, the half " of his readers would have thought it a token of " contempt, if he had rejected a language which " he spake in common with themselves. Thus the " fear of giving offence to the Jews, to whom he " wisely accommodated, whenever it was allowable, " both his doctrine and his manner, in order to win " them to his party, and the seeming impropriety " of deviating from a language, that was already " consecrated to the service of religion, might have " determined him to neglect a style that would have " been more elegant and more fashionable; but on " the subject which St. Paul discussed, ended per-

^p Michaelis, ch. iv. §. 8. p. 152, 155, and 156.

“ haps with less ^a energy and precision, the venerable expressions of the bible, and the terms of religion, which had acquired a prescriptive right from the practice of the synagogue, were highly proper, and even necessary, in delivering the doctrines of Christianity; and when once admitted into the dogmatical parts of his discourse an attick elegance would have made a useless contrast in the remainder of his epistles.”

Thus does an eminent ^r critic defend the apostle, for those deviations from the purity of the Greek style, which have been the subject of so much obloquy from the adversaries of Christianity, and which have probably rendered it more difficult to interpret the

^a It is the observation of Blackwall, which I think he supports by striking examples, that the Hebraisms which are admitted into the New Testament, and the allusions to oriental customs, frequently expressed the ideas of the writer, with more vigor than any other idiom would admit. He further remarks, that even in these, regard has been had to the genuine analogy, and true propriety of Grammar; so that we may find expressions similar to the Hebraisms of the New Testament in Plato, Herodotus, and the best Greek writers, while other Hebrew forms of expression, though scarce bolder or harsher than these, are never used by the sacred writers, because they would have been violations of the analogy and custom of the Greek and Roman languages, as never admitted into them, or used by their approved writers. Of such Hebraisms as these he gives many instances; vid. Blackwall's sacred classics, defended and illustrated, part i. passim, and part ii. chap. i. sect. i.

^r Michaelis, ch. iv. §. 8. p. 155, 156.

epistles

epistles of St. Paul, * than it would have been, had it been possible to avoid all such deviations. It is however obvious, that this species of obscurity was, in a great degree, an inevitable consequence from the nature of the subjects which the apostle treated of, and that so far as it was voluntary, it arose from motives of humility and prudence, very inconsistent with the genius of enthusiasm.

Another more general and powerful cause of obscurity, may be found in the very nature of epistolary composition, leading the apostle to refer to past events, to personal and local circumstances, and even to particular conversations, perfectly known to those whom he addressed, and which he therefore speaks of, and argues on, without entering into any such particular explanation, as would be necessary to illustrate his language, and his reasonings, to modern readers.

Thus the first epistle to the Corinthians is employed, partly in answering a letter received from them, containing various enquiries about certain points of

* This is acknowledged by Michaelis, ch. iv. §. 4. p. 119. The principal mode in which this obscurity affects us, seems to be the use of Greek particles, with all the latitude of the corresponding particles in Hebrew; perhaps no commentator has laboured more successfully to remove this obscurity than Dr. McKnight, in his fourth preliminary essay particularly, sect. 4. and the supplement to this essay, in vol. iv.

opinion

opinion and conduct, as to which they had entreated the determination of the apostle; and partly in censuring certain dissensions and singularities among them, which he had been acquainted with from public rumour or private information; in both the apostle pursues the method which the occasion naturally required; he answers their different queries, without formally repeating the terms in which they were proposed. “ ‘ Now concerning the things whereof ye “ write unto me,” is the only direct mention made of them; and he censures their misconduct, without being anxious to detail minutely all the particulars in which it consisted, while both his determinations and his censures are blended with the various instructions and directions, which suggested themselves to his mind on other points, without any express notice being given of the transition. Now, who does not see that we would much more clearly perceive the exact connection and import of this epistle, if we had the letter of the Corinthians before us, or were acquainted, as fully as the apostle, with the circumstances of their misconduct? but surely our want of this information cannot be adduced to prove St. Paul was a mystical and visionary fanatic.

The second epistle to the Corinthians is not less personal and local than the first—it every where refers to the effects which the first had wrought upon them, a particular account of which the apostle had

received from Titus. It pre-supposes a division in the church of Corinth, which in general adhered to the apostle, while a faction remained that still laboured to undermine his authority, and calumniate his character. The former party he encourages and supports, against the objections and misrepresentations of the latter he vindicates himself, rather however by advancing what his readers would themselves apply to that purpose, than by expressly stating each calumny or misrepresentation, which he wished to repel. Now, though such an express statement might have made the epistle more clear to us, it would have undoubtedly been less dignified, and less natural, in the apostles' situation.

Thus also one of the most difficult passages in the entire New Testament, which occurs in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, chap. ii. evidently derives its obscurity from a reference to a past conversation. The Thessalonians seem to have mistaken a passage in his first epistle for a prophecy, that the day of judgment was immediately to come—an error, productive of such alarm and confusion, the apostle is anxious to remove; he therefore tells them—
 “ be ye not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled,
 “ neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as
 “ from us, that the day of Christ is at hand; let no
 “ man deceive you by any means, for that day shall
 “ not come, except there come a falling away first,
 “ and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdi-
 “ tion,

“ tion, who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all
 “ that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that
 “ he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing
 “ himself that he is a God. *Remember ye not that*
 “ *when I was yet with you I told you these things, and*
 “ *ye know what* “ now restraineth him, in order to his
 “ being revealed in his own season; for the mystery
 “ of iniquity already worketh, until he, who now
 “ restraineth, be taken out of the way, and then
 “ shall that wicked one be revealed.”

The apostle then proceeds to describe the character of that man of sin, in terms which the Thessalonians would, probably, easily understand, from a recollection of the apostles' conversation; but which to us partakes of the obscurity, so generally, and almost universally attending the language of prophecy. Now such a reference to a past conversation was extremely natural; and if we adopt the opinion of those commentators, who conceive the power to whom the apostle alludes, to have been the Roman emperors, which he hints *would be taken away*: motives of prudence may have operated to prevent St. Paul from repeating, in a public epistle, the purport of that conversation.

But I forbear to multiply instances of obscurity, which may be accounted for from our ignorance of

“ In the 6th and 7th verses, I adopt the translation of Macknight.

the

the nature of the apostles' situation and design, in his different epistles, without giving the least room to suspect that it arose from the distraction and incoherence of an enthusiastic mind. That it may be so accounted for I quote with pleasure, the authority of ^x Locke, who was surely no despicable judge of intellectual excellence.

“ That St. Paul (says he) knew how to prosecute
 “ his purpose with strength of argument and close
 “ reasoning, without incoherent fallies, or the inter-
 “ mixing of things foreign to his business, was evi-
 “ dent to me, from several speeches of his recorded
 “ in the Acts; and it was hard to think, that a man
 “ who could *talk* with so much consistency, and
 “ clearness of conviction, should not be able to
 “ *write* without confusion, inextricable obscurity,
 “ and perpetual rambling. The force, order and
 “ perspicuity, of these discourses, could not be de-
 “ nied to be very visible; how then came it that
 “ the like was thought much wanting in his epistles?
 “ and of this there appeared to me to be this plain
 “ reason, the particularities of the history in which
 “ these speeches are inserted, shew St. Paul's end in
 “ speaking, which being seen, cast a light on the
 “ whole, and shew the pertinancy of all that he
 “ says; but his epistles not being so circumstanced,
 “ there being no concurring history that plainly de-

30 * Vid. Locke's preface to his commentary on St. Paul's
 epistles, vol. 3, of his works, p. 105.

ent

“ clares

“ clares the disposition St. Paul was in, what the
 “ actions, expectations, or demands, of those to
 “ whom he wrote required him to speak to, we are
 “ no where told—all this, and a great deal more,
 “ necessary to guide us into the true meaning of
 “ the epistles, is to be learned from the epistles them-
 “ selves, and to be gathered from thence with
 “ stubborn attention, and more than common ap-
 “ plication.”

It may not, perhaps, be useless to my younger
 readers to observe, on this part of my subject, that
 the very circumstances which contribute to this spe-
 cies of obscurity in the epistles, form at the same
 time the strongest internal proofs of the genuineness
 of these compositions, and of the truth of all the
 transactions on which the proof of Christianity de-
 pends. Such a variety of references to particular
 times, and places, and persons; and above all, ap-
 peals to individuals as to facts which they knew, and
 conversations they had heard; answers evidently
 given to letters that had been received, and enquiries
 that had been made; appeals and answers, such as
 would be clear and intelligible, if we suppose the
 facts alluded to real, these letters to have been before
 the writer of the epistles, and these enquiries to have
 been made, but which could have no conceivable
 object or meaning otherwise. Such particulars never
 find place in the artful texture of forged and fictitious
 compositions; these always avoid unnecessary refer-
 ences to circumstances, which would only make their
 detection

detection easy and certain; they deliver their doctrines unconnected with facts; they guard as much as possible against objection; they every where betray marks of reserve and caution, of artifice and design; far different are the epistles of St. Paul, every line of them speaks the language of a man intent ' on present, real, urgent business, addressing others equally engaged in the same transactions, and anxious to influence, and to direct them in some particular mode of conduct. In a word, we see in the epistles of this great apostle nothing of the fictions of imposture, nothing of visions of fanaticism; every thing bespeaks reality and truth.

Another cause of obscurity peculiarly affecting St. Paul's epistles, arises from his dwelling so much more fully than any other writer of the New Testament (St. John, perhaps, only excepted) on the most exalted and abstruse doctrines of the Christian

I cannot gratify any reader, who wishes to see ingenuity and truth combined in defence of Christianity, more than by referring him to Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, in which the genuineness of St. Paul's epistles is evinced, by comparing them with the Acts, and with each other. The *undesigned coincidence* between the history in the Acts, and the allusions in the epistles—the natural turn of the apostles' sentiments and language, according to the situations in which he, and those whom he addressed, were placed, seem to me to form so strong a proof of the truth of the whole history of the first planting of Christianity, as, if considered with attention and candour, scarce any incredulity could resist.

scheme.

scheme. “ It is St. Paul, ^a chiefly, who, in his
 “ epistles, has explained the gospel economy in its
 “ full extent, has shewn its connection with the for-
 “ mer dispensations, and hath defended it against the
 “ objections by which infidels, both in antient and
 “ modern times, have endeavoured to overthrow
 “ it.”

Now, if men do not forget their place in the scale of beings ; if they will not suppose themselves competent to decide on the whole plan of the divine economy in the moral world, without doubt or hesitation, though constant ^a experience proves to them, that they are able to judge but very partially, and imperfectly, of the divine economy in the physical world, which yet seems so much more constantly and obviously submitted to their enquiries, they will see, that when the apostles and evangelists state themselves to have received a revelation from God, and appeal, in confirmation of this, to plain facts, to miracles and prophecies, and historical testimony, it is in the highest

^a Vid. Macknight's first preliminary essay in proof of this, vol. i. p. 5 to 56.

^a Vid. Butler's Analogy, part i. chap. vii. of the government of God, considered as a scheme imperfectly comprehended.—Part ii. chap. iii. of our incapacity of judging what were to be expected in a revelation, and the credibility, from analogy, that it must contain things liable to objection.—Chap. iv. of Christianity, as a scheme imperfectly comprehended ;—and chap. v.—viii. the particular system of Christianity, the appointment of a Mediator, and the redemption of the world by him.

degree irrational to reject these proofs without examination, and to pronounce the promulgators of this supposed revelation wild enthusiasts, because some parts of the system they deliver, are found to be mysterious and obscure.—The scheme which Christianity presents, embraces the whole extent of God's moral government, as it regards this world, commencing with its creation, and closing only with its dissolution; it is even declared to be intimately connected with the display of the divine attributes to all orders of intellectual beings, ^b “*such things as angels desire to look into.*” The author of it is represented as of a divine nature, and most exalted dignity, the Son of God, and judge of the world. The means it employs are various and awful; but its obvious practical tendency is to promote virtue and piety.—Shall we say all this is the mere dream of enthusiasm, because we do not clearly comprehend the detail of all its parts?—Shall we neglect its positive proofs, which are perfectly level to our capacities, and judge rashly of what they are obviously incompetent to decide on? Surely this is to invert that order of reasoning, which on other subjects we find ourselves obliged to observe; for in every thing else we begin with what is plain and certain, before we proceed to what is complex, doubtful and remote.

Men who thus proceed in their religious enquiries, well deserve the rebuke pronounced against them by

^b 1 Peter i. 12.

the celebrated Boyle, whose researches into nature served, not to diminish, but to encrease his reverence for Christianity. "As to some passages (says he) of scripture which are really obscure, since it is the abstruseness of what is taught in them, which makes them inevitably so, it is little less saucy, upon such a score, to find fault with the style of the scripture, than to do so with its author for making us but men."

I conclude this part of my subject, by observing, that however various causes may contribute to cast a partial shade over the Christian revelation, they are very far from eclipsing the lustre of its divine original, or intercepting that salutary light, by which it directs the steps, and brightens the prospects of the human race. The facts on which its evidence is founded are remarkably free from obscurity and doubt, and its leading doctrines are clear, as far as is necessary, to all who candidly and impartially improve the means of information they enjoy; the occasional obscurity of the scriptures does not render it difficult for the humblest Christian to discover the principles and rules by which his moral conduct should be regulated in this scene of trial, or prevent him from being fully assured, that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel; and that *faith*,

* Vid. Boyle's Essay on the stile of the holy scriptures; his answer to the objection from their obscurity, § 5. vol. 2. p. 101, of the folio edition, in 5 vols. Lond. 1755.

an humble reliance on the veracity and the mercy of God, "*working by love,*" by sincere and cheerful obedience, from heartfelt gratitude and reverence to God, and active good will to man, is an essential condition of final acceptance.

And while the occasional obscurity of the scriptures does not prevent them from guiding the humble and illiterate Christian in his way to heaven, we perceive that it may serve many important purposes in moral discipline; it excites the curiosity, and fixes the attention of the learned and inquisitive, while it furnishes an object of enquiry, that if rightly used, will, at once, exercise their understandings, and improve their hearts—to many who may, perhaps, by their happy situation, and their intellectual characters, be almost exempted from other material difficulties in their probation, it forms a trial of their candour, humility, and serious desire to trace the Divine will.

That it also affords occasions for disputes and contention, for heresy and schism, for heat and violence, surely is not inconsistent with the general tenor of God's moral government, in which every thing, as it is valuable when rightly employed, is capable of being proportionably perverted and abused: nor should it be forgotten, that this very obscurity of scripture affords the strongest reason for that mutual forbearance and good will, amidst diversities of opinion, which crowns the
Christian

Christian character, and forms the very bond of peace, and of all virtues. Surely beings, such as we are, ignorant and fallible, should never forget, that the more grounds there are for doubt and contrariety of opinion, the more obviously it is our duty to "receive those that are weak in the faith, but not to "doubtful disputations," and to cultivate that charity, without which he who liveth is dead before God.

SECTION II.

The warmth and earnestness of St. Paul's epistles not imputable to enthusiasm.

FROM what has been hitherto adduced, it seems sufficiently evident that the obscurity, so much complained of in the epistles of St. Paul, arises in a great degree from the language which the apostle was led to use, as most natural to himself, and the generality of those whom he addressed, and best adapted to the sacred subjects which employed his pen; from the nature of epistolary composition abounding with allusions, which, though clear to those for whom they are immediately intended, are obscure to readers of a distant country, and an age long subsequent; and from the incompetence of the

human faculties to comprehend, fully and distinctly, the whole extent, and the exalted and mysterious objects of the Christian scheme.

It has been shewn that these various circumstances, far from proving the apostle a wild and visionary fanatic, tend to confirm the authenticity of his works, and the truth of his claims to a divine inspiration.—But in addition to these circumstances, the obscurity of these epistles undoubtedly arises, in a great degree, from the warmth of the apostles' mind—from the rapidity of his thoughts—from his neglecting to point out exactly the connection and method of his discourses, and to ascertain the distinct object of every part.

Does it however necessarily follow that we must impute this warmth, this rapidity, this apparent neglect of regular method, to the violence and incoherence of enthusiasm? Surely to assert this would be to take the whole question for granted.—Warmth and zeal are indeed natural consequences of fanaticism; but they are not decisive proofs of it, except they arise to a degree for which no other adequate cause can be assigned, or except their effects are absurd and extravagant, inconsistent with reason, and therefore unworthy of God.

In order then to decide this question, we must consider what causes may have produced this warmth in
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the apostle, under the circumstances in which he was placed, without supplying any just grounds for questioning his claim to a divine authority.

Now, in considering the probable causes of such warmth it is evident, that if St. Paul was really directed by inspiration to preach the gospel, he could not but feel the great dignity and importance of the sacred subjects which he treated of. Christianity in every view of it was calculated to rouse the warmest feelings of devout joy and gratitude, reverence and self-abasement, in every pious mind. The unparalleled virtue and benignity of its author, his supernatural wisdom and power, his cruel sufferings and death, his divine and mysterious nature, his ascension and exaltation, the supremely important character he bore, and the final effects of his interposition as Redeemer and judge of the world—all these united formed such an object, as no human mind could contemplate with coolness and indifference, when convinced of its reality, as we suppose the apostle to have been, by direct and irresistible proofs.

Christianity was not less calculated by its *doctrines* to rouse similar feelings; it decided all those questions, and solved all those doubts, which perplex and depress the soul of man, when looking forward to futurity; it assured him that he should not remain in the darkness of the grave, but should rise with a new and incorruptible body to eternal existence; that he
should

should, in the very next stage of his being, be judged by Christ Jesus, and receive according to his use of the means of improvement afforded him in this present life. That though bound to perform the whole law of righteousness, his weakness and his guilt were not without a remedy; that if he prayed for strength and assistance, God would bestow it; and if he repented, his judge would pardon; for he had died to redeem him.

But the Christian was not called on merely to yield to this interesting and awful system of doctrines an inactive assent—his profession required a total change of principles and conduct, a total renunciation of the crimes, as well as the prejudices and errors of his former life; he was called on to forsake the multiplied pollutions of idolatry, and worship the one true God; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this life, looking for his reward to another world, where eternal happiness or misery would await him, according to the sentence of that Jesus, the certainty of whose existence was frequently proved (especially to St. Paul) by plain and uncontroverted miracles exhibited to his senses, and even wrought upon himself.

With such an impression of the gospel as this, was it natural, I might almost say was it possible, for the apostle to receive Christianity, and to dedicate his life to preaching it, and yet regard it with coldness,
teach

teach it in calm and frigid language, and never betray any marks of zeal and earnestness? surely not. So far then from considering the warmth of St. Paul as a decisive proof of delusion and fanaticism, we must admit it to have been the natural consequence of the reality and truth of his divine mission: had no traces of such zeal and warmth appeared, we could not but pronounce him insincere and hypocritical.

The only cause of our hesitating a moment to admit this conclusion, is undoubtedly found in our proneness to judge concerning the feelings of the first teachers and believers of Christianity, by the feelings of even the most sincerely religious at the present day, which, it must be confessed, rarely exhibit such warmth as animated St. Paul; but a moments reflection will expose the fallacy of such reasoning, and convince us that, removed as we are by a period of near one thousand eight hundred years from the first origin of the gospel, we may feel but very weakly the great importance of various circumstances attending it; which could not but make a deep impression on the primitive converts. Never having ourselves witnessed or joined the absurd, impure, and bloody rites of idolatrous worship, we are not accustomed to receive with sufficient gratitude that rational and simple religion, which teaches that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Never having laboured under the burthen of Jewish ceremonies, we feel but faintly the comforts
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of that law of liberty which the gospel reveals. Never having felt the tormenting doubts and fears of those, who shrink from death as the stroke of annihilation, or the commencement of misery, we value not as we ought the gracious terms of forgiveness, and the hopes of a happy immortality, which our Redeemer and Lord holds out to every sincere penitent.

Even the miracles of the gospel affect us very faintly, in comparison of the deep and awful impression which they must have made on the apostles, and their first converts; with us they are the objects of reason and reflection; with them they were the object of sense and sight, the constant subject of astonishment and praise. Can we wonder then if the apostle speaks of the gospel, its evidence, its doctrines, and its effects, with a warmth and vehemence, which, however it may exceed the religious zeal which such subjects now excite, is really no more than what their exalted nature, and their stupendous importance, deserves? No—he only speaks the language of nature and truth, when he describes the change wrought in the conduct and hopes of himself, and every convert, by receiving the gospel, in the most bold and glowing terms; when he calls it, passing from slavery to freedom, from sin to righteousness, from death to life, a total change of vital principles, even a new creation. Having established the resurrection of Christ by the fullest proofs, and
thence

thence inferred the certainty of a general resurrection, and the power of Christ to pardon the penitent, how natural and just that bold apostrophe—"d Oh! death " where is thy sting! oh! grave where is thy " victory!" When reflecting on his own bigotted attachment to the Jewish law, in which he had so long prided himself, he is led to compare it with his present well-grounded faith in the gospel, he exclaims not less justly than emphatically—"e but what " things were gain to me, those I counted loss for " Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but " loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ " Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss " of all things, and do count them but dross, that I " may win Christ." When he has described the connection of the Christian and Jewish dispensation, and shewn, that even the rejection of the Jews was a regular part of the divine economy for establishing the evidence, and extending the blessings of the gospel to all the world; how naturally, as well as eloquently, does he exclaim—"f Oh! the depth " of the riches both of the wisdom and know- " ledge of God; how unsearchable are his judg- " ments, and his ways past finding out!"

The strong language in which the apostle describes the depravity and blindness of the Heathens, the glorious titles he applies to the Christians, as

^d 1 Cor. xv. 55.

^e Phil. iii. 7 and 8.

^f Rom. xi. 33.

"the called,"—"the chosen,"—"the saints,"—"the
 "redeemed of God," must appear perfectly just and
 rational, when we consider the real difference of cha-
 racter, opinions and hopes, between these two descrip-
 tions of men, and the divine interference from which
 that difference arose. Hence, we see how naturally
 the apostle commences his epistles, "eleven out of
 "thirteen of them, says a judicious writer, begin with
 "exclamations of joy, praise and thanksgiving; as
 "soon as he thought of a Christian church planted
 "any where, and especially by himself, there seems to
 "have been a flow of most lively affection ac-
 "companying the idea, in which all sensibility of his
 "own temporal affections, and of theirs, was swal-
 "lowed up, and the fullness of his heart was com-
 "pelled to vent itself in such chearful, exalted and
 "devout language;" and the same character prevails
 throughout all the epistles. Wherever he thinks of
 the mercy of God, in revealing the gospel, of the
 blessings bestowed by it, and the change it produces
 in men's principles and conduct, he is hurried away
 to an impetuous and exalted strain of thought and
 expression, which, if superficially viewed, may ap-
 pear the effect of enthusiasm; but when compared
 with the situation in which the apostle was placed,
 and the objects which engaged and filled his attenti-
 on, evidently result from sincerity and piety, and are
 perfectly consistent with truth and soberness.

Another

Another natural and powerful cause of warmth and irregularity in St. Paul's writings, may be found in the *severe sufferings* which he had himself sustained, and was constantly exposed to, for the gospel, as well as in the persecuted and distressed state of the churches, and the individuals whom he addressed; the ^arecollection of past dangers, the prospect of still greater, perpetually threatening him and all his followers, could not but produce a degree of agitation and suspense, of strong hopes and anxious fears, totally inconsistent with that deliberate composure of mind, which attends the author who sits and writes at ease. We may without hesitation pronounce, that studied accuracy, a calm and guarded style, regular transitions, and strict method, would have been wholly incongruous and unnatural in such a state of feeling, as the apostle's must have been when he ^bwrote, ¹ immediately after having with difficulty escaped violent death, or when he was in ^kbonds, chained to a soldier who kept him, and hourly expected to be dragged to trial, and perhaps condemned to crucifixion; when a ^lprincipal subject of his letters was to comfort those to whom he wrote for the loss of their dearest friends, butchered by

^a 1 Cor. iv. 9. 2 Cor. i. 4 to 10. 2 Cor. vi. 2 to 10. 2 Cor. vii. 5. 2 Cor. xi. 23—29.

^b Coloss. i. 24. ¹ 2 Cor. i. 8 to 10.

^k Ephes. iv. 1. Acts xxviii. 16 and 30. vi. 20. 2 Tim. i. 15 and 16. and iii. 11. and iv. 16. Phil. i. 13 and 14—29 and 30.

^l As in the epistle to the Thessalonians, ch. iii. 4. iv. 13.

the sword of persecution ; to arm them with fortitude and perseverance, in encountering and sustaining such dangers ; to root out of their hearts hatred and revenge ; and to plant in their stead forgiveness and pity, and kindness towards their enemies, and to enforce patience and tranquillity, submission and circumspection, in the midst of such alarms. In letters written in such a situation, and for such a purpose, is it wonderful that we do not find words nicely selected, periods harmoniously rounded, and the connection of every part regularly laid down at the commencement of each letter, and strictly adhered to in its progress ? Surely to expect this were most unreasonable ; and therefore to impute the want of it to the violence and incoherence of fanaticism, is most uncandid and unjust.

A due consideration of the feelings which the persecuted state of the apostle, and the whole Christian church, would naturally excite, will not only account for the general want of polished composition, and strict order, in the epistles, but fully explain many of those passages which seem most warm and extravagant. Hence we perceive the strict propriety and truth of those passages which assert, in the strongest manner, the immediate support of God in the ministry of the apostle, as well as of those which describe, with exultation, the triumph of Christianity over the opposition it sustained, and express the fullest conviction that no opposition would

would finally prevail against it. Such feelings and such conviction were the immediate and necessary consequence of the apostles' having himself sustained persecution, and escaped death, by miraculous interference ; of his finding that those events which seemed to threaten immediate destruction to the church of Christ, were by an over-ruling Providence so directed, as to contribute to its extension and establishment. Hence St. Paul, alluding to his escape from the tumult at Ephesus, says, " ^m we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of the trouble which came to us in Asia ; that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despaired even of life ; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raised the dead ; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver—in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." Hence also, contrasting the natural weakness of the apostles with the strength which they derived from God, he describes them all as " ⁿ unknown, and yet well known ; as dying, and behold we live ; as chastened, and not killed ; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, yet possessing all things : " and in another passage, " as ^o troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not

^m 2 Cor. i. 8.ⁿ 2 Cor. vi. 9.^o 2 Cor. iv. 8.

" forsaken ;

“ forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed ; always
 “ bearing about, says he, in the body the dying of
 “ the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be
 “ made manifest in our body ; for we which live are
 “ always delivered unto death for Jesus’s sake, that
 “ the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our
 “ mortal flesh”—and hence the apostle’s full confidence in a final reward—“ our light affliction, which
 “ is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more
 “ exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we
 “ look not at the things which are seen, but at the
 “ things which are not seen ; for the things which
 “ are seen are temporal, but the things which are
 “ not seen are eternal.”

The same experience which convinced the apostle of the divine interference, in support of the preachers of Christianity, under the severest persecutions, and inspired him with such triumphant confidence, of obtaining present success and final reward, led him also to dwell with complacency on the weakness of the mere human agents, and the insufficiency of the merely natural means, which God employed as the instruments in this great work ; hence he speaks of wisdom and learning as incompetent to discover religious truth, and overcome what he terms the foolishness of preaching ; not that he in any degree meant to condemn the sober use of reason, in examining the evidence of Christianity, for this he frequently recommends—nor yet that he undervalued

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the assistance of industry and learning, in enforcing gospel truths; for the whole tenor of his instructions to its ministers is the very reverse of this^p; but that he knew that the original discovery of the Christian scheme was not made out by human ingenuity, but by divine revelation; and that the first teachers who spread it, were qualified for the task, not by natural attainments, but by immediate assistance from the Spirit of God. To render this proof of the heavenly original of the gospel clear and undeniable, divine wisdom had selected most of the apostles from men endowed with only moderate talents, and moderate learning. St. Paul himself, though far superior to the rest in both, was yet fully conscious he owed his own original conversion, and his success in converting others, as completely to supernatural interference, as any one of his brethren; hence he disclaims so strongly the contrary supposition, and declares to the^a Corinthians, that he came among them, not with the “enticing words of man’s wisdom, but with the “demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, that “their faith should stand, not in the wisdom of “men, but in the power of God.”

Hence he states so frequently that the^r Jewish doctors, by their vain traditions, and the Grecian philo-

^p Phil. i. 9. Coloss. iv. 3, 6. Vid. 1 Tim. iv. 13. 2. Tim. iii. 14 to 17. Titus ii. 7, 8.

^a 1 Cor. ii. 1 to 5. Vid. Rom. i. ii. and iii. chap.

sophers by their arrogant speculations, had equally corrupted religious truth, and proved themselves utterly unable to instruct and reform mankind; a work which remained to be executed by the humble followers of Christ, whom these pretenders to wisdom rejected with disdain, and opposed with virulence. With this clue, supplied by the plain facts of the gospel history, we are enabled to interpret with clearness, and to reconcile to truth and common sense, all those passages which fanatics have interpreted, or rather perverted, as if they entirely interdicted the use of reason, and renounced the aid of learning in religion. The apostle means totally the reverse of this; it was the vain and false traditions, glosses and corruptions of the Jewish doctors; the wild speculations, the childish disputes, the false and proud philosophy of the Grecian sophists, and the Asiatic gnostics which he exposed and condemned;—it was the insufficiency of unassisted reason, and the presumptuous folly of rejecting divine instruction, which he perpetually laboured to expose; for this purpose it is, that he warns Timothy and Titus against those fables and endless genealogies, which ministered only disputes; against “those profane and vain babblings and ‘oppositions of science, falsely so called, which caused many to err from the faith.”—Such only is the import of all passages, similar to the following, which is, perhaps, the fullest on this subject.

‘ 1 Tim. i. 4.
Titus iii. 9.

‘ 1 Tim. the two last verses; vid. also,

“ Christ sent me, (“says the apostle) not to bap-
 “ tize, but to preach the gospel; not with wisdom
 “ of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of
 “ none effect, for the preaching of the cross is to
 “ them that perish, foolishness; but to us who are
 “ saved, it is the power of God: for it is written, I
 “ will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to
 “ nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where
 “ is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the dis-
 “ puter of this world? Hath not God made foolish
 “ the wisdom of the world? for after (in the wisdom
 “ of God) the world, by its wisdom, knew not God,
 “ it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to
 “ save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign,
 “ and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach
 “ Christ crucified—unto the Jews a stumbling block,
 “ and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them
 “ which are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power
 “ of God, and the wisdom of God: because the
 “ foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the
 “ weakness of God is stronger than men. For you
 “ see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise
 “ men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many
 “ noble, ^x *have called you*: but God hath chosen the
 “ foolish things of the world to confound the wise;
 “ and the weak things of the world to confound the

^u 1 Cor. i. 17.

^x This important alteration in the translation, I adopt from Dr. Macknight, who has, to my mind, fully evinced its propriety.

“mighty; and base things of the world, and things
 “that are despised, hath he chosen; yea, and things
 “that are not, to bring to nought things that are;
 “that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

I Bold and overstrained as this passage might seem, when we do not attend to its occasion and its context, it will, I think, appear founded on certain fact, and perfectly consistent with reason, when we reflect on the ill success of both Jews and Greeks in religious enquiries—on the violent opposition they made to Christianity—on the natural weakness, and even ignorance of the first teachers of the gospel—on their success in overcoming the opposition of the Jewish Rabbies, and the Greek philosophers, by the exhibition of plain and uncontroled miracles, with the clear discovery they made of the undoubted, but neglected and forgotten truths of natural religion to mankind, as well as of the more peculiar doctrines of the Christian scheme.

Persecution from external enemies was not, however, the only source of embarrassment to the apostle: the *opposition he encountered from mistaken zealots, or false teachers*, even in the churches which he himself had planted, at the hazard of his life, was another subject of constant anxiety; and a great part of his epistles is occupied in exposing and confuting the false doctrines which these, his opponents, had introduced; in vindicating his character from the misrepresentations

tions and calumnies with which they had loaded it; rebuking the misconduct of those whom they had seduced; commanding the infliction of public censure and punishment on the most gross offenders; and threatening the obstinate and contumacious with still greater punishments, which he would himself inflict, by the miraculous and apostolical power with which he was invested.

Such topics as these, it would surely have been unnatural, nay, almost impossible to treat of, without a considerable degree of warmth and earnestness. We cannot wonder at the apostle being obliged, frequently, to recall to the recollection of his converts his own preaching and miracles, his labours and his his sufferings; at his appealing to them, with the greatest earnestness, in attestation of his integrity and affection towards them; at his urging and entreating them to adhere to that faith which he had taught; at his describing the misconduct and unworthy views of the false teachers, in the strongest colours, and pointing out the dangers they incurred by following them, in the most forcible manner.

If the conviction the apostle entertained of the divine origin of the doctrines he inculcated was firm; if his sense of their importance was exalted; if he was fully conscious of having taught and acted with singleness of heart; if he considered the guilt of wilfully apostatizing from the truth in Christ as great

and hazardous, he could not but speak freely, and boldly, and urgently, when opposed by error and calumny; when the interests of the gospel, and the virtue and happiness of those churches, which were most dear to him, were at stake. Since then a sincere teacher of divine truths, however sober and genuine his inspiration is supposed, must have entertained these feelings, and expressed them with freedom and earnestness; surely such feelings, and such a mode of expressing them, is no proof of weakness and fanaticism.

In considering the effect which the general persecuted state of the church, as well as the personal opposition particularly offered to the apostles, must have produced in their feelings and writings, it is necessary to remark, that such persecution and opposition contribute materially to confirm the certainty of a divine interposition at the first promulgation of Christianity; because no human means existed to overpower such persecution, and no human artifice could have escaped detection, when into that very society, which was formed, as infidels suppose, merely by such artifice, discord and controversy so early crept, inducing some of its chief leaders to oppose and question each others opinions and pretensions; a contest which, if these claims had not, on the part of the apostle, been founded on truth, would undoubtedly have exposed the fallacy by which they were supported. It is also necessary further to remark, that

that the same circumstances give the adversary to Christianity every advantage he could desire, for detecting enthusiasm in the writings and conduct of its first teachers, if it had really existed; because external persecution, and internal controversy, were, of all imaginable circumstances, the most directly calculated to rouse, and to inflame the smallest sparks of enthusiasm into extravagance and violence. If then, notwithstanding this powerful bias, we discover in the writings of the apostles clear traces of sound judgment and steady self-command, we may without hesitation conclude, that the sobriety, as well as the sincerity of their mind, has sustained the severest trial, and been established by the fullest proof.

This conclusion applies with peculiar force to the writings of St. Paul; because his natural temper was certainly warm, his train of ideas rapid, his turn of style bold and emphatic, and his education such as was calculated to strengthen his impression of the importance of religion. A mind such as this, controuled and directed by a superintending inspiration, was an admirable instrument for the laborious task of spreading the gospel through the wide extent of the Heathen world, in despite of all opposition; but such a mind uncontrouled, and undirected by the Spirit of God, if once infected by enthusiasm, would have exhibited it in all its extravagance, especially when agitated and irritated by such malignant persecution from

from open enemies, and insidious opposition from false friends, as he emphatically describes in the passage, in which he compares his own claims to the gratitude and confidence of the Corinthians with those which the false teachers who opposed him advanced—"wherein soever any is bold, I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I; are they Israelites? so am I; are they the seed of Abraham? so am I; are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool.) [I am conscious of the apparent impropriety of boasting of myself to which I am driven.] I am more—in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered ship-wreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own country-men, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"—Under such

2 Co. xi. 21 to 29.

circumstances

circumstances as these, operating on a mind of such quick sensibility as St. Paul's, we cannot wonder at his warmth and vehemence ; but as all these circumstances were calculated to call forth, and inflame the spirit of fanaticism, had it at all existed in the apostle, we must allow that his sobriety of mind was submitted to the most severe and decisive trial, which the most scrutinizing adversary can desire. Under such circumstances, it was not possible but that his epistles should have exhibited traces of vehemence and self-commendation, and sometimes even of warm resentment, which prejudiced and worldly readers, who regard all religion with indifference, and treat every thing like religious controversy with contempt, would readily pronounce enthusiastic. But they ought not to be thus stigmatized, till it be considered whether this vehemence and self-commendation, and indignant warmth, occasioned by gross injuries and calumnies, ever hurried the apostle to transgress the bounds of reason and propriety ; or whether they were not softened and controuled by such tenderness, humility, and watchful attention to the peace and improvement of the Christian church, as was every way worthy of an inspired apostle, teaching the word of truth, and pursuing no other object than the interests of religion. That the zeal of the apostle was thus directed and controuled, it shall be the subject of the next section, by direct arguments, to evince.

SECTION

SECTION III.

St. Paul's Epistles exhibit such marks of sober judgment, and even of refined address, as are directly contrary to the spirit of enthusiasm.

THE first character which I shall take notice of, as distinguishing St. Paul's writings from the compositions of weak and extravagant fanatics, is the strict attention to propriety, and even the refined address which he displays in adapting his epistles to the situations and tempers of the different churches, and individuals, for whom he designed them, as well as the relations which he bore to them, and the degree of authority which he might reasonably exercise amongst them : a few instances of this will shew how plainly clear reason and sober judgment manifest themselves in the writings of the apostle.

The important question, whether the converts to Christianity were obliged to observe the Jewish law, was that which most engaged the attention, and most frequently disturbed the repose of the Gentile churches ; its discussion therefore occupies a great part of the epistles of St. Paul, who was pre-eminently the apostle of the Gentiles ; it forms the chief subject of the epistles to the churches of Rome and

and Galatia, and is occasionally mentioned in the epistles to Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossi; but in each, it is treated of exactly in that manner, which the situation of each church, and its peculiar connection with the apostle, required. The church at Rome he had not himself planted, nor, as it seems, ever visited previous to the writing this epistle, and the tenor of it is exactly suited to this situation; he commences his letter with assuring them of his earnest desire to visit them—"for I long, says he, to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established;" but lest he should offend them by seeming to doubt of their being established in the faith, with a cautious modesty, well adapted to conciliate men yet strangers to his person, he immediately explains, or recalls, as it were, what he had said, and states the end of his coming to them to be their mutual rejoicing in one another's faith, when he and they came to see and know one another; "that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me." The same spirit of mildness and humble persuasion universally prevails in this epistle; we every where perceive, that though the apostle steadily maintains his own authority, as an inspired teacher, yet he is not satisfied with resting his decisions on this authority alone, he supports them by

^a Vid. Rom. i. 11 and 15.

^a Vid. Locke's note on Rom. i. 12.

^b Vid. Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, ch. i. No. 7 and 8.

appealing to facts of universal notoriety, by adducing the authority of the Jewish scriptures, and by a close and laboured train of argument. We also perceive, that as he had not himself planted the church in Rome, and might not therefore be certain of their being instructed in the Christian scheme; he takes care to weave into his discourse the principal doctrines of the gospel, and to give to those whom he addressed, a comprehensive view of the whole series of God's dispensations to man on the subject of religion.

The epistle to the Galatians was written nearly on the same occasion as that to the Romans; but as the apostle's connection with them was different, he has addressed them in a different manner. He had himself introduced the gospel amongst them, he was therefore certain of their being fully informed in the general doctrines of Christianity; hence he omits those instructions which he judged necessary for the Romans, and confines himself to the single point of convincing them of their error, in departing from the doctrines he had taught, so as to allow the necessity of observing the Jewish law; and as they had thus corrupted the truth, in which St. Paul himself had instructed them with the most affectionate zeal, and which he had confirmed by such miracles, as had established his divine authority amongst them be-

* Vid. Locke's Synopsis, prefixed to this epistle.

* Gal. i. 6.

yond dispute, the apostle treats them with great freedom and plainness.—In the beginning of the epistle, having asserted, in the strongest terms, that “ his apostleship^e was not of man, neither by men, but “ by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who had “ raised him from the dead; he adds—I marvel “ that ye are so soon removed from him that called “ you, to another gospel; and afterwards—but “ though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any “ other gospel unto you than that which we have “ preached unto you, let him be accursed.” In confirmation of his authority, he relates the history of his conduct since his conversion, in order to shew how entirely independent he was of any human teacher, even of the very chief of the apostles.

He appeals to his working miracles among them, and imparting spiritual gifts—“ he, therefore, that “ ministereth the spirit to you, and worketh miracles “ among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or “ by the hearing of faith.”—He addresses them sometimes with the utmost plainness—“ ^s oh! foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should “ not obey the truth!” Sometimes, with the warmest tenderness, bearing witness of their mutual affection, at the moment he expostulates with them most boldly, after recalling to their memory his first preaching among them, and some infirmities which attended his

^e Gal. i. 1.^f Gal. iii. 5.^s Gal. iii. 1.

preaching,

preaching, but which yet they had not despised or rejected, he adds—" ^b for I bear you record, that if possible you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me; am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" and in the next sentence he addresses them in this endearing language—" my little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you." Thus admirably does the apostle adapt his manner to the relation he bore his Gallatian converts, as their first teacher in Christ; and while he expostulates with them in the stile of warm complaint, and acknowledged superiority, and rests his decision of the questions he discusses principally on his own authority, he yet never forgets the intimate connection he had formed with them, or the feelings which it had produced, but softens the tone of command with the tenderness of affection, and a grateful acknowledgement of their filial regard.

The epistles to the churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colossi, were evidently written nearly at the same time, and under the same circumstances. The apostle imprisoned at Rome, fearful least during his absence vicious practices, or erroneous doctrines, should creep into these churches, and particularly

^b Gal. iv. 15. iv. 19.

apprehensive lest the Judaizing teachers should take this opportunity of intruding their heresy, writes to encourage these societies in their adherence to the true faith; but as here there was no occasion to censure any past irregularity of conduct, as amongst the Corinthians, or any positive deviation from the gospel as amongst the Galatians, we find the turn of these epistles different; having heard of the Ephesians standing firm in the faith, he writes to confirm them in this resolution, thanks God for them, and setting forth the gracious design of God in the scheme of redemption, prays that they may be enlightened in this scheme, and displays the glorious state of the Christian kingdom, not in the ordinary way of argument, for the firm conviction of the Ephesians rendered this unnecessary, but couches what he wishes to drop into their minds in thanksgivings and prayers, with an unusual freedom, and sublimity both of thought and expression.

The epistle to the Colossians is written evidently in the same strain as that to the Ephesians; but the epistle to the Philippians, though certainly written at the same time, and when the feelings of the apostle were in other respects the same, yet it is strongly marked by the spirit of personal interest, and ardent affection, suited to the close connection

¹ Vid. Locke's Synopsis, and Macknight's Preface to the Ephesians.

the apostle maintained with his Philippian converts, from whom^k alone, of all the neighbouring churches, he condescended to receive pecuniary assistance in his wants. From such full confidence in their regard for him, and tender anxiety for their spiritual welfare, we find St. Paul warns them against the arts of the Judaizing teachers, in more free, strong and pointed terms than any other church. "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the circumcision;" and he also rests the decision of the question more directly on his own authority. "Be ye followers together of me, and walk so, as ye have us for an example."—It seems however not unworthy of remark, that he does not here adduce any facts or arguments to establish his apostleship, or increase the reverence which the Philippians already entertained for him, as he judged it necessary to do with the Galatians; he rather seems anxious to prevent these favourite converts from supposing that he offered himself as a '*perfect example*;' for when he thus points himself out as the guide whom they should follow, he also takes care to inculcate on them that he himself was yet in a state of trial and of progress, not of complete security or full perfection; "I am not as one who had already attained, or was already perfect; but as one who must still press forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Now surely such sentiments as

^k Phil. iv. 15.^l Phil. iii. 15.^m Phil. iii. 12.

these are very remote from the arrogance of fanaticism.

The epistle to Philemon has long been admired for its tenderness, delicacy and address, and seems so irreconcilable with the style and temper of a disordered fanatic, that Dr. Benson, an eminently judicious commentator, has advanced it as sufficient, even taken singly, to prove that its author was no enthusiast. He is interceding with Philemon, a man it seems of some rank and opulence, to receive and to pardon Onesimus, a slave, who appears to have eloped from his service, and afterwards being converted to Christianity by St. Paul, to have resolved on atoning for his offence, by again submitting himself to his master's power, and returning to his former servitude. On this occasion how admirably does St. Paul unite the character of the authoritative teacher with that of the warm, yet unassuming, intercessor; he addresses Philemon as his "*dearly beloved,*" his fellow labourer, whose faith towards Christ, and benevolence towards the saints, was the subject of his constant thanks to God; and he proceeds—"though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient; yet for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds, which in time past was unto thee unprofitable, but now profitable both to thee

" thee and to me, whom I have sent again : thou
 " therefore receive him that is mine own bowels,
 " whom I would have retained with me, that in thy
 " stead he might have ministered unto me in the
 " bonds of the gospel ; but without thy mind would
 " I do nothing, that thy benefit should not be as it
 " were of necessity, but willingly ; for perhaps he
 " therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest
 " receive him for ever ; not now as a servant, but
 " above a servant—a brother beloved, especially to
 " me, but how much more unto thee, both in the
 " flesh, and in the Lord. If thou count me there-
 " fore a partner, receive him as myself. If he hath
 " wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on
 " mine account, I, Paul, have written it with mine
 " own hand, I will repay it ; albeit, I do not say to
 " thee how thou owest unto me even thine ownself
 " besides ; yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in
 " the Lord : refresh my bowels in the Lord : having
 " confidence in thy obedience, I wrote unto thee,
 " knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say."

In this beautiful passage we have the greatest
 variety of arguments, and motives of the strongest
 kind, couched in terms the most soft and persuasive.
 On the one hand, we have Philemon's reputation for
 goodness, the respect due to his own character, his
 friendship for St. Paul, the reverence claimed by the
 apostle's age, the compassion due to his bonds ; on
 the other, we have Onesimus's repentance and
 return.

return to virtue—his conversion to the Christian religion, and consequent claim on Philemon's piety, as his spiritual brother—his faithful services to St. Paul—the tender interest the apostle took in his concerns—a promise of restitution for any pecuniary loss, accompanied with an insinuation, that Philemon was indebted to the apostle for what was much more than the pardon of his repentant slave, even his own existence as a Christian, the forgiveness of his sins, and his admission into the kingdom of heaven. But the intercessor insists not on his authority as an apostle, or his claims to Philemon's gratitude; he submits all to his free generosity; and closes with a declaration of his full confidence, that under the influence of that, Philemon would do more than he himself thought it necessary to desire. Can there be a doubt, whether such an address proceeded from a fanatic, weak and extravagant, claiming a spiritual authority which had no other foundation than his own spiritual arrogance, and exercising this authority, as such a temper must have exercised it, indiscriminately and violently, unreasonably and mischievously? or whether this epistle was not rather the effusion of a mind replete with good sense, versed in the knowledge of the human heart, animated with the best and tenderest feelings, but whose every feeling was regulated by the clearest reason, claiming no authority to which there was not the most indisputable title, and exercising that authority with the soundest discretion.

The same total freedom from the unreasonableness

O

and

and the violence of fanaticism, which we have seen in the general plan of St. Paul's epistles, is conspicuous in the singular benevolence and address, by which he renders his transitions to an ungrateful subject, as little offensive as possible, particularly towards his countrymen, the Jews, whose obstinate prejudices, and inveterate opposition, perpetually filled him with the deepest anxiety, and exposed him to the greatest dangers.

Instances of this are so frequent, that to transcribe them all would be to form almost a continued comment on several of the epistles—a few, which may be most easily seen when separated from the context, will illustrate and establish the argument; and here I adopt and transcribe, with pleasure, some of those passages which have been selected by one of the ablest critics, who has directed his attention to this part of the sacred scriptures.

“ The Jews, we know, were very numerous at
 “ Rome, and probably formed a principal part among
 “ the new converts; so much so, that the Christians
 “ seem to have been known at Rome, rather as a
 “ denomination of Jews than any thing else. In an
 “ epistle consequently, to the Roman believers, the
 “ point to be endeavoured after by St. Paul was,
 “ to reconcile the Jewish converts to the opinion,

“ Archdeacon Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, ch. ii. no. 8. § 2.
 Dublin edit. p. 61.

“ that

" that the Gentiles were admitted by God to a pa-
 " rity of religious situation with themselves, and that,
 " without being bound by the law of Moses. The
 " Gentile converts would probably accede to this
 " opinion very readily. In this epistle, therefore,
 " though directed to the Roman church in general,
 " it is, in truth, a Jew writing to Jews. Accord-
 " ingly you will take notice, that as often as his ar-
 " gument leads him to say any thing derogatory from
 " the Jewish institution, he constantly follows it by
 " a softening clause. Having (ii. 28, 29.) pro-
 " nounced, not much, perhaps, to the satisfaction of
 " the native Jews, "*that he is not a Jew which is*
 " *one outwardly, neither that circumcision which is out-*
 " *ward in the flesh;*" he adds immediately, "*what*
 " *advantage then hath the Jew, or what profit is there*
 " *in circumcision? much every way.* Having in the
 " third chapter, ver. 28, brought his argument to
 " this formal conclusion, "*that a man is justified by*
 " *faith without the deeds of the law;*" he presently
 " subjoins, ver. 31, " do we then make void the
 " law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish
 " the law." In the seventh chapter, when, in the
 " sixth verse, he had advanced the bold assertion,
 " *that now we are delivered from the law, that being*
 " *dead wherein we were held;* in the very next verse
 " he comes in with this healing question, "*what*
 " *shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid; nay,*
 " *I had not known sin but by the law.* Having in the
 " following words insinuated, or rather more than

“ insinuated, the inefficacy of the Jewish law, viii. 3.
 “ *for what the law could not do, in that it was weak*
 “ *through the flesh, God sending his own son, in the*
 “ *likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in*
 “ *the flesh ;*” after a digression indeed, but that sort
 “ of digression which he could never resist, a raptu-
 “ rous contemplation of his Christian hope, and
 “ which occupies the latter part of this chapter, we
 “ find him in the next, as if sensible that he had
 “ said something that would give offence, returning
 “ to his Jewish brethren, in terms of the warmest
 “ affection and respect—“ *I say the truth in Christ*
 “ *Jesus ; I lie not ; my conscience also bearing me wit-*
 “ *ness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness*
 “ *and continual sorrow in my heart ; for I could wish*
 “ *that I myself were accursed from Christ, for my*
 “ *brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh, who*
 “ *are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and*
 “ *the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the*
 “ *law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose*
 “ *are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the*
 “ *flesh, Christ came.*” When in the thirty-first and
 “ thirty-second verses of this ninth chapter, he re-
 “ presented to the Jews, the error of even the best
 “ of their nation, by telling them, that “ *Israel,*
 “ *which followed after the law of righteousness, had*
 “ *not attained to the law of righteousness, because*
 “ *they sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the*
 “ *works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling*
 “ *stone ;*” he takes care to annex to his declaration
 “ these

“ these conciliating expressions: “ brethren, my
 “ heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that
 “ they might be saved; for *I bear them record, that*
 “ *they have a zeal of God, but not according to know-*
 “ *ledge.*” Lastly, having, ch. x. ver. 20, 21. by
 “ the application of a passage in Isaiah, insinuated
 “ the most ungrateful of all propositions to a Jewish
 “ ear, the rejection of the Jewish nation as God’s
 “ peculiar people, he hastens, as it were, to qualify
 “ the intelligence of their fall by this interesting ex-
 “ postulation, “ *I say then, hath God cast away his*
 “ *people (i. e. wholly and entirely)? God forbid; for*
 “ *I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of*
 “ *the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his*
 “ *people which he foreknew;*” and follows this thought
 “ throughout the whole of the eleventh chapter, in
 “ a series of reflections, calculated to sooth the Jew-
 “ ish converts, as well as to procure from their Gen-
 “ tile brethren respect to the Jewish institution. Now
 “ all this is perfectly natural. In a real St. Paul,
 “ writing to real converts, it is what anxiety to bring
 “ them over to his persuasion would naturally pro-
 “ duce; but there is an earnestness and a personal-
 “ ity, if I may so call it, in the manner, which a
 “ cold forgery, I apprehend, would neither have
 “ conceived nor supported.”

Thus far this excellent writer; and undoubtedly
 these instances strongly confirm his conclusion; but
 I may add, they more strongly confirm the conclu-
 sion

sion I am labouring to support ; for such instances of heartfelt affection, for those whose opinions he most strongly opposes—and anxious care to soften and guard every thought, and every expression, so as, if possible, not to offend, is unexampled in the writings of any man infected with the weakness, the violence, and the pride, so constantly attendant on fanaticism.

Another, not less striking instance of St. Paul's mildness and tenderness, presents itself in the apostle's language to the Corinthians, amongst whom he had discovered the most atrocious ^o incest had been committed, and allowed to continue with impunity. On such an occasion a violent enthusiast would have instantly thundered forth a ban of eternal condemnation, certainly against the individual offender, probably against the whole society ; no expressions would have seemed too bitter, no violence too great. Not so the apostle ; he exposes in strong, but calm and dignified language, the enormity of the crime, the contagion of the example, and the danger of impunity. He commands them "^p to put away from among themselves that wicked person—to deliver him over ^q to Satan for the destruction of the

^o 1 Cor. v. 1.

^p 1 Cor. v. 5.

^q Vid. Benson's history of the first planting of Christianity, vol. i. p. 53. and the notes in Dodd and Macknight. Probably, this means, deliver him over by a sentence of excommunication, to the punishment which shall be in consequence miraculously inflicted on him, by a bodily disease,

" flesh,

“ flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of
 “ the Lord Jesus.”—But when his exhortation had
 produced the desired effect, when the sinner had been
 punished, and reduced to a due sense of shame and
 sorrow for his enormous crime, and when the autho-
 rity of virtue, and the sacredness of religion had
 been thus restored, with what inimitable tenderness
 does the apostle speak pardon and peace to the pe-
 nitent offender, and consolation to the humbled
 church?—“¹ Out of much affliction and anguish of
 “ heart I wrote unto you, with many tears, not that
 “ you should be grieved, but that you might know
 “ the love which I have more abundantly unto you.
 “ If any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me
 “ but in part (that I may not overcharge you all);
 “ sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which
 “ was inflicted of many; so that, contrarywise, ye
 “ ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him,
 “ least, perhaps, such a one should be swallowed up
 “ with overmuch sorrow: wherefore, I beseech you,
 “ that you would confirm your love towards him.”

The same epistle to the Corinthians exhibits St.
 Paul, treating another subject of the most trying
 and delicate nature, with the most consummate
 judgment and address, as well as the most perfect
 composure, and the most unfeigned humility.

One or more teachers had, in the absence of the

¹ 2 Cor. ii.

apostle,

apostle, intruded into the Corinthian church, who laboured to undermine his character, to subvert his authority, and establish their own influence on the ruins of both : with such opponents, how would a wild enthusiast have combated ? doubtless with virulent, undisguised, and unbounded condemnation, unqualified self-applause ; and above all, by denouncing against them, the immediate and irreconcilable vengeance of an offended God. Or, if we suppose him to have united with the heat of enthusiasm, any thing of the artifice and the fraud of imposture, this would betray itself in cunning attempts to reconcile his adversaries, by compromise and concession, or to oppose calumny by calumny, and falsehood by falsehood ; while attention to order and piety would be affected, merely to mask pride and avarice, contending for authority united with emolument. Totally different from either of these is the spirit which pervades the writings of the apostle. He mentions his rivals and opponents only in general terms, not naming them individually, lest he should seem to be actuated by personal enmity, or to wish to excite against them personal opposition. He reprehends the spirit of contention and party amongst the Corinthians, not because it led them to revere an authority *different from his own*, but because it led them to follow *any human* authority, to a degree inconsistent with the reverence due to their common Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ; and he exemplifies the unreasonableness and impiety of such misplaced reverence,

verence, on the supposition of its being paid, not to another, but to himself, and such of his brother apostles, as he most esteemed ; “ for, (says he) “ while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of “ Apollos, are ye not all carnal ? Who then is Paul, “ and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye be- “ lieved, even as the Lord gave to every man ? I “ have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the “ increase ; so then, neither is he that planteth any “ thing, neither he that watereth, but God, who “ giveth the increase.”

In the very same spirit of heartfelt piety, and unfeigned humility, does he teach the Corinthians the just degree of estimation, in which they should hold him, and every other minister of the gospel ; and the principle which bound them to suspend all rash judgment on their character and views, and all contention about their pretensions and authority.—“ Let a “ man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, “ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, “ it is required in stewards, that a man be found “ faithful ; but with me it is a very small thing, that “ I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment ; “ yea, I judge not mine own self, for I know no- “ thing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified ; “ but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore “ judge nothing before the time, until the Lord

* 1 Cor. iii. 4 to 7.

* 1 Cor. iv. chap. 7 first verses.

“ come,

“ come, who both will bring to light the hidden
 “ things of darkness, and will make manifest the
 “ counsels of the heart; and then shall every man
 have praise of God;”—and these things, brethren, I
 “ have in a *figure transferred to myself, and to Apollos*
 “ *for your sakes*, that ye might learn in us, not to
 “ think of men, above that which is written, that
 “ no one of you be puffed up for one against ano-
 “ ther.”—The reasoning the apostle adduces, to
 prove the folly of such arrogant claims on the part of
 the teacher, and such excessive reverence on the part
 of the disciple, is exactly the reverse of that which
 enthusiasm uniformly employs. The enthusiast asserts
 his divine mission, and conceives himself in conse-
 quence exalted above every other human being, and
 entitled to the profoundest reverence; the apostle
 maintains that, because the teachers of the gospel
 were selected by the free choice of God, and enabled
 to obtain success solely by the divine Power; there-
 fore they had no right to value themselves on this se-
 lection, or this success, since both were to be ascribed,
 not to their own merit, or their own exertion, but
 solely to the will and the power of God.

“ Who maketh thee (says he) to differ from ano-
 “ ther? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?
 “ Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory
 “ as if thou hadst not received it?”—What can be at
 once more pious, more humble, and more rational
 than this? what more directly contrary to the spiri-
 tual pride of an overweening enthusiast?

Through

Through the entire of the first epistle to the Corinthians, we find the same spirit of meekness and mildness prevail; willing to avoid all self-commendation, and not to censure or rebuke his adversaries, while forbearance was possible, he claims the regard and obedience of the Corinthians, on the humble, but affecting ground of his having been their father in Christ. " I write not these things to shame you, " but, as my beloved sons, I warn you; for though " ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet " have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus " have I begotten you, through the gospel; where- " fore I beseech ye, be ye followers of me."

The second epistle to the Corinthians was written under circumstances somewhat different from the first: this had produced a considerable effect on that church, a great majority of the Christians there, had been awakened to a due sense of their errors and offences; they had in consequence publicly excommunicated the incestuous person—they had forsaken their false teachers, and submitted to the authority of the apostle with the sincerest marks of penitence; but still these false teachers preserved some influence, and several partizans; to maintain their party, they laboured to exalt their own characters, and to degrade and misrepresent, with the most insidious malignity, the character and conduct of St. Paul: here then the apostle was under the necessity of

speaking plainly and fully, to curb the arrogance of his opponents—to vindicate himself—to convince their deluded followers of the crime and danger of following such false guides; but in doing this, much difficulty occurred; * if he answered nothing to what was charged against him, his silence might be interpreted guilt and confusion; if he defended himself, he was accused of vanity, self-commendation and folly; but he extricates himself out of all these difficulties with singular address,

The false teachers seem to have been Jews, and to have prided themselves on their proficiency in the Jewish law, the permanent obligation of which they probably maintained; they had also brought letters of recommendation to the Corinthians, which contributed not a little to maintain their authority. St. Paul, without denying the divine original, or disparaging the excellence of the Jewish law, shews that it was now superseded by the Christian, the superiority of which he proves, from its greater clearness, its more extensive object, and its universal obligation; and he alleges, that having dispensed to the Corinthians this sacred gift of divine mercy with sincerity, and taught the word of God in truth, he required no letters of recommendation to them, for “that their conversion to Christianity was his commendation, known and read of all men.” That he was to them an ambassador of Christ, and therefore used great

* Vid. Locke's Note on 2 Cor. v. 12.

2 Cor. iii.

plainness

plainness of speech, studying only to be accepted at the judgment seat of God; that "to God he was manifest, and he trusted his integrity was also manifest to the consciences of the Corinthians;"^a that if he commended himself, it was not from vanity; but to give them materials to answer on his behalf "those who gloried in appearance and not in heart."—Whenever he introduces any appeal to his instruction, his sufferings, and his merits as an apostle, it is with many apologies, for what he terms this "foolishness of boasting," thus forced on him. Every where he attributes his power and his success to their true origin, the Divine aid, and speaks of himself with the profoundest self-abasement. And as the apostle speaks of himself with the caution and humility of a composed, but pious mind, so he speaks of his opponents with the firmness of conscious innocence, and the steady tone of just authority, without rushing into the violence of invective, or sinking into the meanness of hypocritical concession. Sometimes he employs a strong, but refined^a irony. Sometimes he states his own conduct and sufferings, for the purpose of their being contrasted with the conduct of the false teachers; but after stating his own claims to the regard of the Corinthians, forbears drawing the opposite side of the picture, and leaves his readers, who were all acquainted with the facts, to form the comparison themselves.

^a 2 Cor. v. 12.

^a Vid. 2 Cor. x. from verse 8 to the end, and chap. xi.

In one passage, and only one, does the apostle expressly load his opponents with the severe charges of being “^b false apostles”—“deceitful workers”—“ministers of satan, who transformed themselves into angels of light, appearing as ministers of “righteousness;”—but the occasion explains and justifies the severity of these reproaches. The apostle, cautious of giving the least room for suspicion or scandal; amongst a people so corrupt as the Corinthians, had uniformly declined accepting from them any pecuniary assistance in his wants; this disinterested and prudent conduct, the malignity of his enemies misrepresents, as a proof either that he had no affection for the Corinthians, or that he was conscious of having no apostolic power, since he made no claim to this apostolic privilege—a privilege which many passages indicate they had availed themselves of with the most interested avidity. Such malignant and mercenary views surely required and justified the severity of the apostle.—It is however exceedingly remarkable, that St. Paul asserts in the strongest manner, the general right of the teachers of the gospel to claim support from those in whose instruction they employed their lives, though he judged it expedient totally to wave the exertion of this right in his own person as to the Corinthians, and never to accept such support, when he could by the labour of his own hands, sustain himself; if such disinterestedness, united with such prudence, does not vindicate

^b 2 Cor. xi. from 7 to 15.

St. Paul equally from the charges of enthusiasm and imposture, there seems to be no possibility of distinguishing vice from virtue, or falsehood from truth.

The conclusion of the second epistle to the Corinthians exhibits most strongly the forbearance and affection, united at the same time with firmness and zeal, which the apostle displayed, even towards those who still continued to despise his authority and reject his commands. “ We do all things, dearly beloved, “ for your edifying ; for I fear least when I come I “ shall not find you such as I would, and that I “ should be found unto you such as ye would not ; “ lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, “ back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults—lest “ when I come again, my God will humble me “ among you, and that I shall bewail many which “ have sinned already, and have not repented of “ the uncleanness, and fornication, and lascivious- “ ness, which they have committed.” He then reminds them of the admonition contained in his first epistle ; he repeats this in his second with solemnity, “ as if, says he, I were present with you the second “ time.” He declares, that if he comes again “ he “ will not spare ;” but previous to the infliction of any final censure or punishment, “ every word should “ be established by two or three witnesses ;” he prays to God that they may do no evil, wishing not for an opportunity of displaying his power, by in-

^c 2 Cor. xii. 19. to the end of the epistle.

sisting any supernatural punishment, but that by their doing right he might be as if he had no supernatural power ; “ for we can do nothing, says the apostle, against the truth, but for the truth ; for we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong ; and this also we wish, even your perfection ; therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me, to edification, and not to destruction : finally, brethren farewell—be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”

From an exactly similar temper proceeds the apostle's direction to the Thessalonians, after having censured the disorderly conduct of some individuals in their church.—“ If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed ; yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.” Thus constantly does this truly inspired teacher unite the most fervent love for virtue and religion, with the tenderest pity for offenders, and soften the severity of rebuke with the mildness of parental affection ; anxious not to reproach, but to reform—not to wound and torture, but to probe and heal the cankered heart of guilt ; his zeal inspires sentiments of humility and mercy, and cloathes them with the artless language of soberness and truth, equally

equally remote from the cunning of imposture, and the violence of fanaticism.

The last characters which I shall notice, as pervading the entire of St. Paul's epistles, and distinguishing them from the incoherent effusions of wild fanaticism, are copiousness of argument, a close and connected train of reasoning, and consistency of doctrines. That these characters really belong to them, Mr. Locke, who studied them with peculiar attention, and who was surely a competent judge of conclusive reasoning, abundantly testifies; while at the same time he notices those circumstances which prevent this close coherence and consistency from being so clearly seen by careless readers. "The utmost, says he, ought to be done to observe and trace out St. Paul's reasoning; to follow the thread of his discourse in each of his epistles; to shew how it goes on, still directed to the same view, and pertinently drawing the several incidents towards the same point; to understand him right his inferences should be strictly observed, and it should be carefully examined from what they are drawn, and what they tend to; he is certainly a coherent, argumentative, pertinent writer, and care, I think, should be taken in expounding him, to shew that he is so. But though I say that he has weighty aims in his epistles, which he steadily keeps in eye, and drives at in all that he says,

^d Locke's Preface to the epistles, p. 105, of the folio edit. vol. iii.

“ yet I do not say that he puts his discourses into
 “ artificial method, or leads his reader into a distinc-
 “ tion of his arguments, or gives them notice of new
 “ matter by rhetorical or studied transitions. He
 “ has no ornaments borrowed from the Greek elo-
 “ quence—no notions of their philosophy mixed
 “ with his doctrine to set it off; *the enticing*
 “ *words of man’s wisdom*, whereby he means all the
 “ studied rules of the Grecian schools, which made
 “ them such masters in the art of speaking, he,
 “ as he says himself, (1 Cor. ii. 4.) wholly neglect-
 “ ed; the reason whereof he gives in the next verse,
 “ and in other places. * But though politeness of
 “ language, delicacy of style, fineness of expressi-
 “ on, laboured periods, artificial transitions, and a
 “ very methodical arranging of the parts, with
 “ such other embellishments as make a discourse enter
 “ the mind smoothly, and strike the fancy at first
 “ hearing, have little or no place in his style; yet
 “ coherence of discourse, and a direct tendency of
 “ all the parts of it to the argument in hand, are
 “ most eminently to be found in him; this I take to
 “ be his character, and doubt not but he will be
 “ found to be so upon diligent examination.”

Consistency of doctrines, however varied his ex-

* Here Locke evidently means, *artificial* politeness, *studied* delicacy, and an *affected* fineness of expression; for that politeness, delicacy and eloquence, are conspicuous in the writings of St. Paul, is most evident; and I trust the reader has even in this work met with sufficient examples to prove it satisfactorily.

pression,

pression, is another character, the very opposite of rambling fanaticism, which the same close searcher into the human mind pronounces to belong to St. Paul. “ ‘ He that reads him, says he, with the attention I propose, will easily observe, that as he “ was full of the doctrine of the gospel, so it lay all “ clear and in order, open to his view. When he “ gave his thoughts utterance upon any point, the “ matter flowed like a torrent ; but then it is plain, “ it is a matter he is perfectly master of. He fully “ possessed the entire revelation he had received from “ God ; had thoroughly digested it ; all the parts “ were formed in his mind into one well-compacted, “ harmonious body, so that he was no way at an “ uncertainty, nor ever the least at a loss concerning any branch of it. One may see his thoughts “ were all of a piece in all his epistles ; his notions “ were at all times uniform and constantly the same, “ though his expressions very various. In them, he “ seems to take great liberty.”

Such is the character of St. Paul's writings, by a man of the most unshackled mind, and the strongest judgment. If this character is well founded, it is not possible the apostle could have been in any degree tinctured with enthusiasm ; strong coherence of reasoning, and uniform consistency of doctrine, are, as it were, the very criterions of sobriety of understanding. But though these characters are most directly

^f Locke's Preface to the epistles, p. 106.

decisive of the point I have so long endeavoured to establish, I have reserved them for the last ; because it is next to impossible to prove their reality otherwise than by referring the reader to the epistles themselves, and forming on them a continued comment. Detached passages, separated from the entire context, would be very inconclusive proofs ; because thus separated that coherence becomes indiscernable, which in the original was conspicuous ; or should it be apparently preserved, it might be suspected that it was only apparently, as a connection might seem to be given to the quoted passages, which the context perhaps would shew to be imaginary and overstrained. But the existence of such coherence and consistency is not less real, or their conclusiveness, as to the apostle's total freedom from fanaticism, less certain, because they cannot be drawn out in words, or shewn any other way than by a reference to the epistles themselves.

I would remark however that all the characters we have hitherto noticed, which were most capable of being illustrated by particular examples, lead us to presume that these also would be found. Close reasoning, and consistent doctrines, are no more than we should expect from a writer, who, as has been shewn, adapts his manner exactly to the relation he bears to those whom he addresses ; who never assumes an authority beyond what he may justly claim, and safely exercise—who cloaths even his severest rebukes, and strictest prohibitions, in language the
most

most mild and conciliating—who, though warm, and zealous, and vehement, is ever softened by charity, and controuled by discretion; and such undoubtedly was St. Paul.

It seems to me almost wholly unnecessary to multiply further proofs of St. Paul's freedom from enthusiasm; I will only remind my reader of his caution to preserve his epistles from being counterfeited, and to secure them an immediate reception from the churches to which they were addressed. 'By writing them

* 1 Cor. xvi. 21. The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand.

Gal. vi. 11. Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

Ephes. vi. 21. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you, for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.

Phil. iv. 15. Now, ye Philippians, know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me in giving and receiving, but ye only; for even at Thessalonica ye sent once, and again, to my necessity:—and verse 18, I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things from you. Coloss. iv. 7. All my affairs shall Tychicus declare unto you, whom I have sent for the same purpose. Ib. 16. When this epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that ye read the epistle from Laodicea. The salutation by the hand of me, Paul. Remember my bonds. 1 Thes. v. 27. I charge you by the Lord, that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. 2 Thes. iii. 17. The salutation of Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle. 2 Tim. iv. 9. Do thy diligence

them with his own hand—or by annexing a signature and closing salutation, in his own hand—by charging

ligence to come shortly unto me :—verse 10. Demas hath forsaken me, &c. only Luke is with me ; take Mark and bring him with thee. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books ; but especially the parchments :—and 21. Do thy diligence to become before winter, &c. The whole chapter should be read, as a proof of the genuineness and natural strain of the epistle. Tit. i. 5. For this cause left I thee in Crete, &c. Tit. iii. 12. When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto Nicopolis, for I have determined there to winter ; bring Zenas, the lawyer, and Apollos, on their journey diligently, that nothing be wanting unto them.

Philemon 22. Withal prepare me a lodging ; for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

These circumstances, and a variety of others, stated in this chapter ; and above all, those coincidences so lately brought into notice by the critical ingenuity of Archdeacon Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, seem to prove, I had almost said to demonstration, the genuineness of St. Paul's epistles, and the reality of the transactions to which he alludes, and by consequence the truth of the whole history of the first promulgation of Christianity.

The epistle to the Hebrews, in which such particulars as these do not occur, was probably on that account, not universally received by the caution of some early Christians, though on enquiry it was afterwards received on sufficient proof. As it was not, however, necessary for my purpose, I have made little or no use of it in my arguments on this subject. The absence, however, of any direct avowal of St. Paul's, being himself the writer, and of such particulars as might discover him to the readers, may have been *designed*, according to the opinion of Clement of Alexandria, as cited by Eusebius, " writing to the " Hebrews, who had conceived a prejudice against him, and " were ever suspicious of him, he wisely declined setting his
" name

charging that his epistles be read publicly to all the holy brethren, and carried to be read from one church to another—by joining in the superscription and the salutation, the names of the chief ministers, and most respectable individuals of the church from whence he wrote, and of the church to which he wrote, and sending them by chosen messengers, whom he names—by his mixing private and domestic circumstances and counsels with his religious instructions to his friends: such circumstances as these strongly confirm the freedom of the apostle from that wild enthusiasm, which, wrapt up in extacies and mysteries, neglects all precautions, and despises all concerns necessary to be attended to in the common course of life: but they serve a still more valuable purpose, they establish beyond doubt, that these epistles could never have gained any credit in the Christian world, if they had not been acknowledged by the respective churches, to which they were addressed, from the very period when they were said to have been sent to them; and that those churches could not possibly be deceived in attributing them to the apostle at that period. If they consisted only of

"name at the beginning, lest he should offend them."—Vid. Lardner, vol. 6, p. 411, edit. of 1788. Hence, as it appears to me, he gives them scarce any intimation of the author till towards the close of the epistle, and even then obscurely, and with apparent apprehension. "I beseech ye brethren suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in a few words: know ye that our brother Timothy, is set at liberty, with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."

30

general.

general advice and exhortations, we might, perhaps, admit a possibility of deception; but when they were addressed to particular persons, said to be at one time at a particular place—carried by a special messenger, who is named—marked with a certain signature, supposed to be known to the people addressed, specifying certain particulars which they are requested to perform, and referring to letters received from, and conversations held with them, how utterly impossible a forgery should gain credit with these immediate proofs of its own falsity! If it appeared *at the time it was said to be written*, would not the persons to whom it was addressed immediately reply, we see not the messenger by whom it is said to be brought—we know not this signature—we will wait till the apostle performs these promises here made, in person—we know nothing of the letters from us, and the conversations with us, to which he alludes. If we suppose it to be produced *at a period subsequent to that at which it states itself to be written*, the difficulties against it would encrease a thousand fold; what would be the obvious answer? we never heard of this before; if it was written, and sent by the apostle from a particular place, by a special messenger, so long ago, where has it lain since? In short, the epistles of St. Paul carry with them internal marks of authenticity and sobriety, which render it utterly inconceivable they should be the offspring of forgery or fanaticism.

Of the epistles composed by the remaining apostles it is scarcely necessary to add, that they also are free from those various extravagancies and weaknesses which detect and disgrace the rants of enthusiasm; for the most cursory perusal will prove that they are much more obviously so than the epistles of St. Paul, bearing equally the marks of sincerity, piety, and benevolence; they are less bold, less complicated, and less obscure; employed almost wholly in detailing and impressing moral duties, as the only sure proofs of sincere faith, and the indispensable conditions of divine acceptance; and in cautioning their readers against false teachers, and perversions of of scripture: we perceive nothing in them which gives even a plausible colour to suspect their authors of fanaticism. But when we come to examine the nature of the duties they inculcate, and the motives which they urge, we find in them the most decisive proofs of a spirit directly contrary to that which fanaticism would inspire; we perceive the genuine dictates of that heaven-taught wisdom, which one of them so beautifully contrasts with the base counterfeit which human fraud and folly would substitute in place of the divine original. “ Who is a wise man
 “ (says St. James) and endued with knowledge among
 “ you? let him shew out of a good conversation his
 “ works with meekness of wisdom; but if ye have
 “ bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not,
 “ and lie not against the truth. This wisdom de-
 “ scendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual,
 “ devilish;

" devillish ; for where envying and strife is, there is
 " confusion and every evil work ; but the wisdom
 " that is from above is first pure, then peaceable,
 " gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and
 " good fruits, without partiality, and without hypo-
 " crisy, and the fruit of righteousness is sown in
 " peace of them which make peace."

But the proof of the apostles' freedom from fana-
 ticism, arising from the nature of their moral doc-
 trines, is too important not to be fully examined ; I
 reserve it therefore for the subject of the following
 chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

The doctrines of the gospel vindicated from the charge of enthusiasm.

SECTION I.

The morality of the gospel could not have been dictated by the spirit of enthusiasm.

THE first leading practical character of Christianity, which seems to distinguish it totally from the extravagancies of enthusiasm, appears to be this, that it teaches men to judge of the strength and sincerity of their religious principles, and the conformity of these principles to the Divine will, more by their practical tendency and effects, than by the force of internal confidence or devout extacy with which they may be attended. That enthusiasts uniformly, and I might almost say necessarily, judge of their religious improvement and acceptance in a manner the very reverse of this, cannot, I think, be disputed. Enthusiasm, or an ill-grounded belief of a divine inspiration, if it does not always originate in spiritual pride, must however always contribute to produce it; since a false opinion that the Divinity condescends to enlighten our minds by a peculiar revelation,

velation, cannot fail to inspire the self-elating confidence, that we are the peculiar favourites of that Divinity; and the effect of such a false confidence can scarcely terminate in meer speculative error alone; it has an obvious, almost an irresistible tendency to sap the foundation of moral principle, by establishing a false criterion of acceptance with God. The enthusiast neglecting to compare his temper and conduct, soberly and humbly, with the divine will, as manifested by the internal admonitions of reason, or the clear and sacred voice of revelation, judges of his acceptance by what he conceives a clearer and surer way, even by the strength of his internal persuasions, and the lustre of that heavenly light which appears, in his disturbed imagination, to penetrate, warm, and purify his inmost soul. Thus men are taught to seek, and hope, and pray for secret illuminations, and strong confidence; in comparison of these, moral rectitude and practical piety are sometimes wholly rejected and despised, and frequently undervalued and overlooked, as supplying an uncertain, or at best, a tedious path to spiritual pre-eminence; hence those vices in which fanatics have sometimes indulged themselves without remorse, or shame, or fear; as if crimes, which would irretrievably condemn the profane, could not fully the purity of the elect: hence their writings are full of encomiums on devout extacies, sudden internal religious raptures, while they seldom exhort to sober, vigilant self-government, and persevering, active virtue; and rarely describe or enforce those
various

various and important duties, which the diversified and minute relations of social life demand.

Now the spirit of Christianity is directly the reverse of this. Nothing can more clearly follow from the express declarations of our Lord and his apostles, as well as the general tenor of the New Testament, than the inseparable connection between faith and good works in the Christian scheme. Nothing is more undeniable ^h than that no degree of persuasion, desire, expectation, or dependence, will be accepted of God, without a fixed and prevailing resolution of sincere and holy obedience." How express and awful are the declarations of our Redeemer and our Judge on this most important point; ⁱ "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but they that do the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity."—Thus also the apostles—" ^k as the body without the spirit, says St. James, is dead, so faith without works, is dead also."—And St. Paul—" ^l follow peace with all men, and

^h Doddridge's Lectures, proposition cxxxvii. 4.

^j Mathew vii. 21.

^k James ii. 26.

^l Hebrews, xii. 14.

holiness,

“holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”
 —And again—“^m God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile; for there is no respect of persons with God.”

Thus, however directly the gospel condemns that proud self-confidence in our own righteousness, which claims as a reward due to our own merits, that divine acceptance, which human imperfection could not obtain, but from the gracious condescension, and pardoning love of God—however strongly it warns us against that presumption, which relies on our feeble strength, unsupported by divine aid, yet, never does it separate true faith from pure morality, or permit men to suppose they will be exalted to sanctity and to heaven, independent of any effort of their own. Christian faith is a most extensive principle, including in its nature and effects, the whole of moral virtue; for the gospel precepts evidently require, that we

^m Rom. ii. 6.

should love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; that we should labour to be perfect, as he is perfect—finally, “^a whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, we are commanded to think on and to practice these things.”—Thus is the morality of the gospel entirely free from that enthusiastic pride, which, elated with its supernatural sanctity, stoops not to the controul of reason; and utterly remote from that enthusiastic extravagance, which, hurried away by spiritual raptures and extacies, spurns the feelings of nature, and the restraints of decorum. No; the gospel guards the dignity of religion, by engaging in its support, truth and justice, order and propriety.

A still further proof that the gospel system is totally undebased by any mixture of fanaticism, seems to be found in this, that it commands men to try all pretences to inspiration, by precisely those criterions to which enthusiasm would not appeal; not only by the connection of the proposed system, with previously admitted revelation, and the proofs of supernatural power, which its first teachers produced; criterions, the truth and soberness of which we have

^a Phil. iv. 8. Vid. also Gal. v. 19—24.

before discussed, but also by the practical tendency of the doctrines, which are proposed on this alledged divine authority, and by the good conduct and virtue of the teachers themselves. By these criterions, did our Lord and his apostles demand, that they should themselves be judged; and by the same did they instruct their followers to judge of others.—“^o Beware, says our Lord, of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits; a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore, by their fruits shall ye know them.”—And again, appealing to the spotless purity of his own exalted character, “^p Which of you, says he, convinceth me of sin? and if I speak the truth, why do ye not believe?” With similar confidence does the apostle of the Gentiles appeal to the Thessalonians, for the purity of his conduct; “^q Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe.” And when he is describing that grand apostacy, which in latter times should corrupt the Christian church, he describes it, not only as coming, “^r with the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders,” but also, “with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that

^o Mat. vii. 15.^p John viii. 46.^q 1 Thes. ii. 10.^r 2 Thes. ii. 9.

“ perish,

“ perish, because they received not the love of the
 “ truth, that they might be saved ; and for this cause,
 “ God shall send them a strong delusion, that they
 “ should believe a lie, that they all might be con-
 “ demned who believed not the truth, but had plea-
 “ sure in unrighteousness.”—Thus perpetually does
 the wisdom which is from above display purity and
 rectitude, as the essential principles which directed
 the lives and the precepts of the first teachers of our
 holy faith.

Another distinguishing character of enthusiasts is,
 their proneness to believe they have already attained
 the summit of moral perfection, and a full security
 of divine approbation, so that further improvement
 is impossible, and even further vigilance unnecessary ;
 for to such excess has fanaticism carried its extrava-
 gance, that weak and depraved mortals have dared
 to presume they were exalted so high above their fel-
 low men, by the immediate hand of heaven, as to
 be incapable of deviating into error, or sinking into
 guilt.—Very opposite to this is the humble, but soul-
 exalting morality of the gospel of Christ, which, on
 the one hand, forbids the most wicked sinners to
 despair, and animates them to reform, by the heart-
 reviving assurance, “ that if they will repent and turn
 “ to their God, he will abundantly pardon,” through
 the mediation of that Christ, “ who came into the
 “ world to save sinners ;” while on the other, it incul-
 cates humility and self-abasement on all the sons of men,
 Q declaring,

declaring, that "there is none righteous, no, not
 "one"—holding out a spotless model, which we
 should perpetually labour to imitate; still however
 convinced, that in this state of trial and discipline we
 must never cease to advance, with humble caution
 and vigilant self-government, conscious we are still
 frail unprofitable servants.—How admirably does St.
 Paul exemplify this calm and humble frame of mind,
 even at the period when he was gifted with every
 apostolic power, employing his every faculty for the
 glory of God, and the salvation of man, and was
 prepared to seal his testimony to the gospel of Christ,
 even with his blood. If such a man were an enthu-
 siast, would he not, in such circumstances feel, and
 loudly proclaim himself the chief favourite of his
 God, purified from all moral imperfection, and se-
 cure from fall?—Not so the apostle—"what things
 "were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ;
 "yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for
 "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus
 "my Lord, if by any means I might attain to the
 "resurrection of the dead; not as though I had
 "already attained, or were already perfect; but this
 "one thing I do, forgetting those things which are
 "behind, and reaching forth unto those things
 "which are before, I press toward the mark for the
 "prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;"

and our steps are "the meekness of Christ," who came into the
 "world to save sinners," Phil. iii. 7, 11, &c. and
 "to save us from all unrighteousness," and
 "to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good
 "works."

and in another passage he uses these striking words—
 “ I keep under my body, and bring it into sub-
 jection, lest, that by any means, when I have
 preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

Thus does the gospel temper the fervor of devo-
 tion, by the meekness of humility, and guard alike
 against that despair, which would prevent the refor-
 mation of vice, and that presumptuous security which
 would endanger the fall of virtue ; bearing in both
 views, the genuine characters of that wisdom which
 descends from above, which is fully acquainted with
 every weakness of human nature, and for every
 weakness graciously provides a support.

Another character which enthusiasm always dis-
 plays, and from which Christianity is totally exempt,
 is the contempt of all external helps to religion. Fa-
 natics proposing to themselves a supernatural state of
 spiritual exaltation, as the necessary effect and true
 test of genuine devotion, disregard all rites and ce-
 remonies as wholly worthless, and seldom encourage
 men to continue in the regular use of those means
 of improvement, which the ordinary course of pro-
 vidence supplies ; the attentive perusal of the divine
 word, serious reflection, and rational enquiry into
 the divine attributes and conduct ; public worship,
 regular private prayer, and perpetual self-examina-

1 Cor. ix. 27.

Q 2

tion.

uion. Seldom do fanatics exhort men to continue with
 humble, steady patience in the use of those means,
 without experiencing or expecting any sudden and
 violent change of temper or conduct, any direct or
 resistless conviction of divine favour. Thus, while
 groveling superstition never aspires to sincere piety
 and rectitude, but rests in rites and ceremonies, in
 tedious prayers and gloomy penances; fanaticism,
 on the contrary, with proud and presumptuous rash-
 ness, conceives it can suddenly reach the summit of
 religious perfection, without ascending, by those na-
 tural gradations, which reason and humility point out.
 Christianity alone observes the true medium, teach-
 ing us to employ abstinence and prayer, as means to
 excite and strengthen piety and self-government,
 though never to be substituted for these ennobling
 and sacred qualities. The established rites of Chris-
 tianity, baptism, and the supper of the Lord, are
 fewer, more simple, and more significant, than any
 other religion ever has enjoined. The model on
 which our blessed Lord directs we should form our
 prayers, is the most perfect and comprehensive, the
 most pious and humble, which human imagination
 can conceive. Frequent devotion is enjoined, while
 a multitude of words is forbid. We are commanded
 "not to forsake the assembling ourselves together,
 "but in every thing to make known our requests
 "unto God, by prayer and supplication, with thank-

" Heb. x. 25.

" giving ;

“ giving ;” but we are also commanded, “ to take
 “ care, that all things be done *decently and in order.*”
 The observance of the sabbath is required ; but still
 in subordination to the great purposes for which it
 was ordained. “ The sabbath is represented as made
 “ for man, not man for the sabbath ;” and “ I will
 “ have mercy and not sacrifice,” is the general prin-
 ciple which is to regulate our religious duties.

On this subject Archdeacon Paley * has well ob-
 served, that “ St. Paul’s judgment, concerning a
 “ hesitating conscience, his opinion of the moral in-
 “ difference of many actions, yet of the prudence,
 “ and even the duty of compliance, when non-com-
 “ pliance would produce evil effects upon the minds
 “ of the persons who observed it, are as correct and
 “ just, as the most liberal and enlightened moralist
 “ could form at this day.”—A few instances will il-
 lustrate the justice of this observation, so important
 to our present argument.

The Gentile Christians, who had never known any
 distinctions between different kinds of food, as being
 some clean and others unclean, were fully and justly
 persuaded that Christianity allowed them to use any
 wholesome food without distinction, while the Jewish
 converts, who had been accustomed to the distinction
 of the law, conceived themselves obliged to abstain

* Paley’s *Horæ Paulinæ*, the conclusion, p. 41 r.

from flesh meat in Heathen countries for fear of being polluted, and to eat nothing but fruit and herbs, which their law left without restraint. Thus also the Gentile Christians regarded all days alike, while the Jewish retained their ideas of the superior sanctity of some, according to the appointments of the Mosaic law. This difference of opinion and conduct afforded occasion for jealousies and disputes; while the Gentile despised what seemed to him the superstitious scrupulosity of the Jew, and the Jew viewed with abhorrence the profane liberty of the Gentile. On this point how admirably does St. Paul combine good sense and liberality of opinion with caution, and prudence in conduct. He admits the error of the Jewish opinion, but maintains that so long as it was retained, and influenced the persuasion of any man's conscience, it ought to be followed in his practice.—“I know, (said he) and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.”—But while he approves the rational freedom of the Gentiles in their opinions, he condemns the want of prudent and benevolent attention to the prejudices of their weak, but well-meaning brethren, whose feelings they shocked, and whose affections they alienated, by openly despising, and acting in defiance of their scruples, and even

† Rom. xiv. which should be read over to explain the facts on which this argument is founded.

disturbing

disturbing their conscience, by tempting them to compliances which they could not sincerely approve. " ² But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." And he finally determines that each should bear with the different opinions, and pass no uncharitable constructions, no sentence of reprobation, on the conduct of the other. " Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him which eateth: for God hath received him. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."—How wholly inconsistent is this with the spirit of fanaticism.

Another instance of similar prudence in the apostle's precepts, combined with similar charity, occurs in his answer to the enquiries which the Corinthians had made concerning the liberty of eating food offered to idols. Some conceived that they might even partake of the sacrifices offered to idols, so long as they retained the firm conviction, that these idols were nothing but vain fictions, and joined not in any internal act of worship or sentiment of reverence. Others on the contrary were so scrupulous, that they were afraid of

² Ibid.

purchasing

purchasing the meat offered in the market to public sale, lest it might have been part of some victim to a Heathen god, and should, as they imagined, involve them in the guilt of partaking in an idolatrous sacrifice. The apostle, with his usual good sense and liberality of mind, acknowledges the justness of *their* opinion, who held most strongly the vanity of idols; but adds, that in this, as every other case, each man's conduct was to be regulated by the persuasion of his own conscience.—“ As concerning therefore, says
 “ he, the eating of those things which are offered
 “ unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the
 “ world; and that there is no other God but one.
 “ Howbeit, there is not in every man that know-
 “ ledge; for some, with conscience of the idol unto
 “ this hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an idol,
 “ and their conscience being weak, is offended.”—
 Here also he inculcates the necessity of acting in such a manner as should not offend the prejudices, or entangle the consciences of weak brethren, however intrinsically indifferent the action may be. “ Meat
 “ (says he) commendeth us not to God; for neither
 “ if we eat are we the better; neither if we eat not
 “ are we the worse: but take heed lest by any
 “ means this liberty of yours become a stumbling
 “ block to them that are weak; for if any man see
 “ thee, who hast knowledge, sit at meat in the idols
 “ temple, shall not the conscience of him which is

* 1 Cor. viii. and x. which should also be read over to illustrate the apostle's reasoning.

“ weak

“ weak be emboldened to eat those things which are
 “ offered unto idols, and through thy knowledge
 “ shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ
 “ died ; but when ye so sin against the brethren,
 “ and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against
 “ Christ.”—In another passage, where he warns the
 Corinthians against partaking in idolatrous rites, he
 distinguishes carefully between the general principle
 of Christian liberty which he had laid down, and the
 errors or temptations to which its abuse might lead.
 “ ^b What say I then ? that the idol is any thing, or
 “ that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any
 “ thing ? but I say, that the things which the Gen-
 “ tiles sacrifice, they sacrifice unto devils, and not
 “ unto God : and I would not that ye should have
 “ fellowship with devils.”—To close our observation
 on this point, how admirably does the apostle distin-
 guish between the full extent of Christian liberty
 considered in general, and the expediency of exer-
 cising that liberty in particular cases ; and how
 clearly does he lay down, both by precept, and by
 reference to his own example, the principles which
 should determine that expediency.—“ ^c All things are
 “ lawful for me, but all things are not expedient :
 “ all things are lawful for me, but all things edify
 “ not. Let no man seek his own, (*advantage solely*)
 “ but (*also*) that of others. Whatsoever is sold in the
 “ shambles, that eat, asking no question for consci-

^b 1 Cor. x. 19, 20.

^c 1 Cor. x. 23.

“ence sake : for the earth is the Lord’s, and the
 “fullness thereof. If any of them that believe bid
 “you, and ye be disposed to go ; whatsoever is set be-
 “fore you eat, asking no question for conscience
 “sake. But if any man say unto you this is offered
 “in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that
 “shewed it, and for conscience sake. Conscience, I
 “say, not thine own, but of the other. Whether
 “therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do
 “all to the glory of God,

Thus in the gospel pure intention—the heart—
 rectitude of principle—humility—sincerity, are all
 in all : the humble publican is justified above the self-
 righteous Pharisee ; the mite of the widow is accept-
 ed beyond the ostentatious display of donations accu-
 mulated by the rich ; the minuter duties of religion are
 to be sincerely discharged ; but never can they excuse
 or atone for our neglecting the weightier matters of
 the law, “justice, judgement and truth.” Thus in
 the Christian scheme every thing has its value, place
 and order, assigned to it, with the most consummate
 wisdom, and the most perfect knowledge of the hu-
 man heart ; now can such a system originate from the
 wild extravagance of fanaticism ? As well might we
 suppose the ravings of the mad-man should, in order
 and regularity, excel the speculations of the philoso-
 pher :—no ; such doctrines are certainly the offspring
 of truth and soberness alone.

Another

Another character of Christian morality, directly contrary to the genius both of fanaticism and imposture, is the manner in which it inculcates the obligation, and explains the duties which arise from the different relations of civil society. Every religious system, founded on imposture, has had for its chief object, to employ the power obtained by spiritual delusions, in acquiring or maintaining political authority; it consecrates the legislator, the sovereign, or the magistrate, by investing them with the characters, or supporting them by the sanction of the prophet and the priest. In this respect Christianity, in its original simplicity, stands totally free from every suspicion. The kingdom of our Saviour and his apostles, was most literally "*not of this world*;" in no one instance did they claim or exercise any degree of political power, or encroach in the least on the authority of the magistrate, either by their precept or their practice. They did not make religion a pretext for division or confusion; the sovereign and subject, the husband and wife, the master and servant, altered not their mutual relations from the reception of Christianity; none were released from the ties of marriage, the bonds of allegiance, or the stipulations of service, by the new religious character which they assumed; they were still to continue in their respective states, and to discharge their various duties, but with more strict fidelity, and more exalted views: no longer "*as pleasers of men, but as servants of*

^d Col. iii. 22.

“ God.” Thus anxious only for the religious and moral improvement of men, to this alone did they confine their attention : surely this is the conduct of disinterested sincerity.

But their caution and forbearance in this respect, was not more decidedly free from the interested ambition of imposture, than from the violence of fanaticism ; this, in almost every instance where it has been exhibited, has carried with it a levelling principle in political affairs. The enthusiast exalted, as he conceives himself, by the peculiar favour of God, scorns to yield homage to man ; he tramples on the claims of established authority ; he despises the relation of citizen and subject as mean and worldly, and sometimes, even as impious and profane. The extravagancies which flow from such wild tenets too frequently disgrace the pages of ecclesiastical history, to require they should be here recited ; but it is important to remark, how entirely Christianity is free from them. How admirably does our Saviour point out the perfect consistency between civil obedience to men, and pious homage to God. “ Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” How carefully did he guard during his whole ministry, and especially in the last awful scene of his trial and his sufferings, against giving the least pretext for suspecting him of claiming any political power for himself, or for his followers ;

“ Matt. xxii. 21.

and

and with what uniformity do his apostles observe the same caution. “^f Render to all their dues ; “ (says St. Paul) tribute to whom tribute is due ; “ custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; “ honour to whom honour. Owe no man any “ thing, but to love one another : for he that loveth “ another hath fulfilled the law.” And in his precepts to Timothy, whom he appointed to preside over the church of Crete, “^g I exhort therefore “ that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessi- “ ons, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; “ for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that “ we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all “ godliness and honesty.” And St. Peter, after having exhorted Christians—“^h To have their con- “ versation honest amongst the Gentiles : that “ whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they “ may by your good works, which they shall behold, “ glorify God in the day of visitation,”—immedi- ately takes care to impress the necessity of similar caution on the subject of political obedience ; that they should take care that their religion should not be calumniated, as if it afforded a pretext for fediti- on and licentiousness. “ⁱ Submit yourselves to “ every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake : whe- “ ther it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto gover- “ nors, as unto them that are sent by him for the pu- “ nishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them

^f Rom. xiii. 7. ^g 1 Tim. ii. 1. ^h 1 Peter ii. 12.

ⁱ 1 Peter ii. 13.

“ that

" that do well. For so is the will of God, that with
 " well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of
 " foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty
 " for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants
 " of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood.
 " Fear God. Honour the king." Thus Christiani-
 ty inculcates subordination and submission to
 established government, as a duty of high impor-
 tance in general, and peculiarly necessary in the
 peculiar situation which the first Christians were
 placed in during the infancy of their religion, when
 it appeared as a distinct sect, under a Heathen go-
 vernment, connected with the religion of the Jews,
 who so frequently joined in tumults and sedition
 against the Roman empire, till they were crushed
 with utter ruin. To enforce such a duty by such
 motives, seems to me wholly inconsistent with the
 genius of fanaticism.

But though Christianity inculcates subordination
 thus strongly as a general duty, rendered still more
 important by the peculiar situation of the primitive
 Christians; I perfectly agree with an ingenious
 writer, who with too much hasty assertion on the na-
 ture of Christian morality, has, however, combined
 much judicious observation—"That the Christian
 " legislator every where preserves a remarkable silence
 " on subjects esteemed of all others of the highest

* Soame Jenyns' Internal View of the Evidence of Christi-
 anity, 7 edit. p. 53 and 54, Dublin, 1776.

" importance,

“ importance, civil government, natural policy, and
 “ the rights of war and peace ; of these he has not,
 “ (says this writer) taken the least notice, probably
 “ for this plain reason, because it would have been
 “ impossible to have formed any explicit regulations
 “ concerning them, which must not have been incon-
 “ sistent with the purity of his religion, or with the
 “ practical observance of such imperfect creatures as
 “ men ruling over, and contending with each other :
 “ for instance, had he forbid all resistance to the
 “ reigning powers, he had constituted a plan of
 “ despotism, and made men slaves ; had he allowed
 “ it, he must have authorized disobedience, and
 “ made them rebels ; had he in direct terms prohi-
 “ bited war, he must have left his followers for ever
 “ an easy prey to every infidel invader ; had he per-
 “ mitted it, he must have licensed all that rapine
 “ and murder, with which it is unavoidably attend-
 “ ed :” thus this writer, as it seems to me, with
 equal ingenuity and truth. If we admit his opinion,
 surely it cannot be questioned, that this silence of
 Christianity, wherever it would have been unwise
 and unsafe to give direct precepts, displays not only
 sound sense, but such a divine wisdom and foresight,
 as are plainly inconsistent with enthusiasm. But
 though Christianity declines every question with
 respect to different forms of government, it is, to
 adopt the observation of the judicious Paley—“¹ It

¹ Vide Paley's View of Evidence of Christianity, p. 373—
 Dublin edit. 1794.

“ is alike applicable, useful and friendly to them all ;
 “ in as much, as first it tends to make men virtuous,
 “ and as it is easier to govern good men than bad
 “ men, under any constitution :—as 2dly, it states
 “ obedience to government in ordinary cases to be,
 “ not merely a submission to force, but a duty of
 “ conscience :—as 3dly, it induces dispositions fa-
 “ vourable to public tranquillity, a Christian’s chief
 “ care being, to pass quietly through this world to a
 “ better :—as 4thly, it prays for communities, and
 “ for the governors of communities, of whatever
 “ description or denomination they may be, with a
 “ solicitude and fervency proportioned to the influ-
 “ ence which they possess upon human happiness—
 “ all which, in my opinion, is just as it should be.
 “ Had there been more to be found in scripture of a
 “ political nature, or convertible to political purposes,
 “ the worst use would have been made of it, on
 “ which ever side it seemed to lie.”

Yet another character of Christian wisdom remains,
 which I have reserved for the last ; because, as it per-
 vades and controuls the whole gospel scheme, so is it
 most decidedly contrary to the genius of enthusiasm :
 even this, “ that it is peaceable and gentle, and
 “ easy to be entreated ; full of mercy and good
 “ fruits.” That this must ever be directly contrary
 to the nature of fanaticism, reason and experience
 prove beyond the possibility of doubt. Fanatics

“ James iii. 17.

conceiving

conceiving they are the peculiar favourites of the Divinity, are prone to despise all men whom they think less favoured than themselves. Convinced that their opinions are the dictates of inspiration, and their cause the cause of heaven, they deem contradiction impious, and resistance criminal; and while no true inspiration supplies wisdom to confute or persuade their adversaries—while they can exert no miraculous power to prove their divine authority on clear and rational grounds, they will be naturally led to bear down contradiction and resistance by clamour and outrage, to punish obstinacy by the pious justice of persecution, and convert men to the reception of those truths, which they deem necessary for the salvation of their souls, by sacrificing their bodies at the faggot and the stake; and even when the impulse of humanity, or the influence of religious principles, though corrupted and obscured, prevents the enthusiast from proceeding to such extremities as these; yet he will necessarily discover impatience of contradiction, unyielding obstinacy, and severe condemnation, of all who differ from, or oppose him. Scarcely ever will he entertain any wish to concede, or conciliate, or exercise any care to avoid giving occasion of dissension or offence: here then it is, that true Christianity most clearly proves its heavenly original; who does not see that every page, every line of the gospel, breathes the calm, and benign, and merciful spirit which its divine Author displayed,

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when

when ^a he checked the intemperate zeal of his followers, who would have called down the fire from heaven on the Samaritans, when they refused to receive him?—"He turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." But it is not merely in forbidding and reprobating every species, and every pretext of persecution that the heavenly wisdom of the gospel appears most distinguished. It is still more illustriously conspicuous, in its reprobating every principle and feeling which lead not to persecution only, but even to discord, and offence of every kind; and particularly on points of difference in religious opinions and religious conduct. What impetuous and over-bearing fanatic would have dictated such admirable precepts as St. Paul has done in language beautiful, because it is the language of a heart overflowing with benignity, with humility, with every pious and dignified principle which can ennoble the heart of man.—"^a Him, says he, that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand at the judgment seat of God. So then every one shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-

^a Luke ix. 55.

^a Rom. xiv. and 1 Cor. viii. & x.

“ block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way,
 “ For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;
 “ but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy
 “ Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ,
 “ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.
 “ Let us therefore follow after the things which
 “ make for peace, and things wherewith one may
 “ edify another. We that are strong ought to bear
 “ the infirmities of the weak, and not to please our-
 “ selves : for even Christ pleased not himself ;
 “ wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also
 “ received us to the glory of God. Give none
 “ offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles,
 “ nor to the church of God ; even as I please all
 “ men in all things, not seeking mine own profit,
 “ but the profit of many, that they may be saved :
 “ Be ye therefore followers of me, even as I am of
 “ Christ.” Let me appeal to the reason and the
 feelings of every man, whether such language and
 such sentiments could by any possibility proceed
 from a blind and furious enthusiast. But still fur-
 ther, though an enthusiast might entertain such sen-
 timents, and inculcate such precepts, we can hardly
 suppose he would make these the leading principles,

This last advice of St. Paul to his followers has been ad-
 vanced by some in proof of his ambition, and of that being
 the true principle of his conversion. How erroneously, is ma-
 nifest from the entire passage here quoted ; moral imitation,
 and not factious adherence of followers to an ambitious
 leader, was plainly the object of the apostle.

the foundation and support of his whole system of morality, and put forward this peaceableness, this gentleness, this mercy, this tolerance, as preferable to all other virtues combined; or rather so essential to the Christian character, that without them no Christian virtue could be supposed to exist. Would a fanatic have done this? nay, farther still, would a fanatic, who we must suppose had worked himself up into a false conviction of his being inspired and directed by heaven, because this inspiration and direction had long been the constant object of his wishes and his prayers, and now formed his happiness and his pride? would such a man, I ask, have preferred this mercy, this brotherly love—in one word, this Christian charity, to that very inspiration, to all his apostolic gifts, to all his miraculous power? yet this St. Paul has done.

“ Though I speak, says he, with the tongues
 “ of men and of angels, and have not charity,
 “ I am become as sounding brass or a tink-
 “ ling cymbal; and though I have the gift of
 “ prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all
 “ knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that
 “ I could remove mountains, and have not charity,
 “ I am nothing.” Would an enthusiast have distinguished between unbounded generosity to the poor; nay, between the firmness of martyrdom and this sacred principle of Christian benevolence? No. Yet St. Paul has so distinguished—“ though I be-
 “ stow all my goods to feed the poor; and though

1 Cor. xiii.

Ibid.

“ I give

" I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Why? because when this benevolence is wanting, the source of every virtue is dried up; for from this only can they flow pure and genuine. 'Tis " charity *only* that " suffereth long, and is kind. Charity envieth not " —is not puffed up—is not easily provoked— " thinketh no evil: and finally, there abideth " faith, hope, charity; but the greatest of these " is charity!"

I have thus considered a few, and but a few, of those characters of Christian morality, in which it is most strongly and directly contrasted with enthusiasm. Let me now entreat my reader to reflect for a moment, who were the men who possessed this wisdom, and whence did they acquire it? Were they the philosophic sages of Greece and Rome? No. Were they politic and experienced-legislators and senators? No. Were they in the Jewish nation the wise and learned doctors of the law? No—a Jewish peasant, the reputed son of a carpenter, and who for thirty years had resided with a private and obscure family, calls together twelve tax-gatherers and fishermen; they become distracted with fanaticism, and the system we have examined, is formed of the ravings of these fanatics collected and preserved:—but there was among them one learned, educated man, St. Paul; he, perhaps it may be said, connected this admirable system of purity and brotherly love. We admit the learning

learning and the talents of the apostle to the Gentiles ; but let us not forget what we have already observed, that his natural temper was impetuous and warm, and that his education, added to his knowledge of Heathen literature the doctrine and traditions of the Pharisees ; he was educated in their habits of pride, and bigotry, and intolerance ; while in his sober reason he was himself a bigot, and a persecutor even unto death : but he was suddenly hurried away, as the objector would suppose, by the frenzy of enthusiasm, and from that moment he became peaceable and gentle, merciful, liberal and tolerant. Gracious God ! will men believe all this, and yet persevere to ridicule others for blind, irrational, implicit faith ? No. Let us not judge hardly of those who differ from us ; but if they judge unfairly of our cause, of the cause of Christianity and benevolence, let us not, as we value truth and piety, let us not yield lightly to their *rash* opinion. Surely if these characters belong to the morality of the gospel, and are compared with the natural disadvantages under which its teachers laboured, they plainly bespeak a divine original.

SECTION

SECTION II.

The speculative doctrines of Christianity did not originate in enthusiasm.

THE speculative doctrines of Christianity, so far as our present subject leads us to examine them, may be considered perhaps as of three different descriptions. 1st. Those which reason might have discovered, or at least when discovered, may perceive to be certainly true, from their connection with self-evident principles of knowledge;—2dly. Those which reason could only perceive to be probable, not certain, and in which therefore the light of revelation may be highly important to dispel our doubts, and direct our opinions;—and 3dly. Such doctrines as are plainly above reason, which it had no conception of antecedent to the existence of Christianity, and which, after they are discovered, it receives solely on the authority of revelation, requiring only that they shall not contradict those principles of knowledge, which rest on self-evident or demonstrative certainty.

It is foreign from the object of this treatise to enter into metaphysical or abstract discussions, or compare the probability of controverted opinions. It is desirable, and happily it is easy, to separate such questions from

from the main proofs which support the gospel of Christ; and whatever may be the particular profession or the private opinions of an author, he ought not to bring them forward to clog, with unnecessary difficulties, so important an enquiry as that which relates to the origin and foundation of the whole Christian scheme. Under this impression I shall confine myself to such brief observations as the nature of my subject seems necessarily to require.

It will not be questioned that Christianity teaches, in the most clear and express manner, all those doctrines which reason might have discovered, or when discovered can demonstrate to be true, and which are therefore termed the principles of natural religion: the existence of one God, the first cause of all things, endowed with infinite perfection; the dependance of man on him, and the consequent necessity of obedience to his will, so far as it is known, as the only mode of securing the greatest degree of perfection and happiness to which man can attain. But abstractedly considered, this would not prove that the teachers of Christianity were either divinely inspired, or even free from enthusiasm or imposture; these truths were expressly taught in the Jewish religion, and therefore may have been borrowed from it either by deceivers or fanatics. But when we contemplate the *manner* in which these truths are taught, and compare it with the national prejudices, the low rank, and the unlearned education of the first preachers of
the

the gospel, the comparison will, I think, afford a strong presumptive proof of their freedom, either from the artifice of imposture or the weakness of fanaticism; they teach the truths of natural religion with much zeal and earnestness, and at the same time with such simplicity as seem unaccountable, if we suppose them artful, interested deceivers. “To love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind,” they represent as “the first and great commandment;” the temper of mind to exalt and perfect which, the whole discipline of this world, as well as the entire Christian scheme, is stated to be subservient. On this they ground the love of our neighbour as second in the rank of moral duties. All the attributes of the Divinity are represented in striking, though frequently familiar terms and images, but always so as to promote virtue and purity of heart, justice and mercy to our fellow-creatures, and an entire submission to the will, and trust in the providence of God. The personal interests or prejudices of the preachers never intermix with, or debase this sacred subject. Now, is not all this inconsistent with the character either of interested artifice or deluded fanaticism?

If in addition to this we consider the general state of religious knowledge in the world at the introduction of the gospel, the difficulty of forming such a just

* Matt. xxii. 37.

and pure representation of natural religion, will appear so great as to render it very incredible, that the authors of such a representation should have been weak and visionary enthusiasts.

It is notorious that the most polite and learned nations of the Heathens, notwithstanding the progress of learning and civilization, had continued for a series of years to accumulate error upon error, and profanation on profanation; they had degraded religion by the grossest idolatry, and corrupted morality by tolerating, and even sanctioning the foulest crimes. Their sages and philosophers made scarce any attempt at all, and never any successful attempt, to check the progress of error, idolatry and vice, amongst the multitude; they confined their instructions to the learned and speculative, and in general talked an obscure and technical language, calculated chiefly for the use of their respective sects; and they entertained the most perplexing doubts on the most demonstrable and fundamental truths of natural religion, such as the unity, the perfections, the providence, and even the existence of a God; and very rarely did they attempt to found the practice of virtue on the divine command, or teach men to expect recompence according to their works from the divine sentence. But whatever truths they may have taught, the teachers of the gospel (St. Paul perhaps excepted) had little opportunity of any access to their instructions,

tions, and evidently none of them have borrowed any thing from their systems.

The Jews, it is true (most of them at least) maintained the existence, perfections, and providence of God; but almost every sect of them intermixed with these truths errors and prejudices which corrupted their genuine simplicity, and weakened their practical effect. Some conceived that God might excuse the absence of piety and virtue, if conciliated by ceremonies and sacrifices; others denied a future life, and thus subverted the sanctions of morality; almost all, with the narrow views of bigots, conceived God to be exclusively the God of their own nation, and despised other nations, as unworthy his regard; and they advanced traditions and comments so puerile, extravagant, and even immoral, as rendered the genuine word of God of none effect.

Amidst this general corruption of faith and practice arose the first teachers of the gospel; and though obscure and unlearned, though educated in the midst of Jewish bigotry and superstition, they rescued natural religion from the corruptions of both Jews and Heathens, and taught men every where to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Does not this render it highly improbable that they were weak deluded fanatics?—nay, does it not even afford a strong presumption of their being really enlightened by

by that divine Spirit, whose dictates they professed to declare to the children of men.

In the next place, when we direct our attention to those doctrines which the light of nature could but darkly discern, and never certainly demonstrate, we find that Christianity has decided them exactly in that manner which reason admits to be most probable, and which most directly promotes the interest of virtue and the happiness of society. The certainty of a future state—of judgment and retribution in the next period of our existence—of pardon on repentance—of assistance from God in our efforts to improve—the obligation and utility of prayer—the superintendence of divine Providence over all events, whether public or private, minute or important. These doctrines of Christianity are such as the best men have ever wished to find true, though the wisest were never able to demonstrate. Nor is it merely the doctrines themselves, the manner in which they are proposed and established increases the probability that the first preachers of the gospel were far removed from the extravagance and weakness of fanaticism; they are proposed with great plainness and simplicity; they are established, not merely by positive assertions, nor yet by subtle and intricate reasonings, but by plain facts, proving at once the divine authority of the gospel in general, and the particular certainty of the resurrection from the dead—that
great

great decisive fact so essential to all our hopes of life and immortality.

If we consider further, that Christianity exhibits this infinitely important scheme of doctrines, undebased by those puerile absurdities and wild extravagancies which are perpetually blended with all fanatical systems, our readiness to admit their divine original ought surely to be considerably encreased.

Let it then be remembered, that the Christian revelation passes by in silence, or expresses in general and guarded terms, many points which enthusiasts are apt to dwell on with peculiar complacency, and to dress up with a train of fictitious circumstances which a ready invention supplies, or a heated and deluded imagination mistakes for realities. Examine with this view the accounts which the New Testament gives us of a future state, and how totally unlike is it to the wild visions of fanaticism. We are told that good men shall rise with bodies "glorified and incorruptible." We are taught that the nature of the happiness to be enjoyed in another life, cannot be distinctly apprehended by our present faculties. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him." It is declared that men will be rewarded in the next life, according to the use which they make of the talents

' talents with which they are entrusted in this ; that those who are here active and faithful, will hereafter be employed in more important trusts, and more extensive activity. We are led to believe that much of our happiness will consist in an encreased knowledge of God, and of his works ; in being " made " like " unto him in purity and benevolence ;" in enjoying the society of higher spirits, and " just men made " perfect." We are ² assured, that those who drop into the grave with minds sunk in the sordid and base pursuits of this world, and polluted with unrepented crimes, shall not enter into the kingdom of God. Thus every thing necessary to encourage virtue and religion is disclosed, without the intermixture of a single circumstance which could inflame spiritual pride, indulge sensual desire, or gratify idle curiosity ; we meet with no minute description of the pleasures, the employments, the glories of that future state, which might, perhaps if strongly impressed upon our imagination, draw us off from the necessary business, or make us loath the innocent pleasures of the present life. We are taught " ³ that it is appointed to all men once to die, and after that the " judgment ;" but of the intermediate state of those

¹ Vid. the parable of the talents, Mat. xxv.

² 1 John iii. 2 & 3.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Vid. also Mat. xlii. 41--49.

⁴ Heb. ix. 27. Vid. also the entire 25th chapter of Mathew. Vid. also Bishop Law on the nature and end of death in the Christian covenant, annexed to his theory of religion, with the appendix.

who sleep in death, as we need only know that our state of trial terminates with this life, and "that in the grave no man can work," so this only is positively and distinctly told: thus also the existence of superior orders of intelligences is asserted, but their distinctions and offices, their powers and employments, as they concern not us, no attempt is made to disclose them.

It deserves to be noticed, that if the writers of the Gospels, Acts and Epistles, had been subject to the dominion of a heated imagination, and been misled by the delusive visions of fanaticism, many facts occurred in the course of the history they relate, which would have naturally led them to indulge in imaginary excursions into the spiritual world, and to gratify their own vanity, as well as catch their readers attention by pretending to describe the particulars of that scene so interesting to human curiosity. They sometimes relate appearances of angels; sometimes they mention visions by which they were instructed in some important point of doctrine, or directed to some particular mode of conduct; especially many instances occur of individuals, well known to themselves, who had risen from the dead; and above all, the leading fact on which their relation turns, is the resurrection of their Lord, who they assert ² *for forty days after was seen of them, and spoke*

² Acts i. 3.

" of the things which belong to the kingdom of God."
 Now did it not require more than ordinary sobriety of mind, as well as the strictest attention to truth, never to be seduced by such alluring opportunities to consecrate the fictions of art, or the delusions of imagination, as the dictates of heaven, and never once to break that silence they observed on all points, in which, however ardently men may desire information, it is not necessary they should obtain it.

Thus, whether we consider the importance of the doctrines which Christianity has advanced on the subject of our present relation to the Deity, and our future expectations from him, the clear dignified and convincing mode in which they are established, or the omission of all those topics, which either deceivers or fanatics would naturally have descanted on with particularity and eagerness, in every one of those views we perceive, that integrity and sobriety of mind which distinguished the first teachers of our faith; and in every one we discover strong marks of genuine inspiration.

SECTION

SECTION III.

The more mysterious doctrines of Christianity considered.

WE are now to notice, as far as our subject requires, those DOCTRINES of Christianity which are plainly ABOVE REASON, which were adopted by our Lord and his apostles from the Jewish religion, or which were first promulgated by themselves, and which can be received and understood no further than they have judged it necessary to reveal them.

Our Lord commanded his apostles: “^a to go and “ teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of “ the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” The part therefore which each of these divine persons have taken in the dispensations of God to man, as well as their relation to each other, and their mutual connection, forms a peculiar and mysterious object in the Christian revelation. On the other hand,^b this revelation exhibits to us mankind as a fallen and corrupted race, whose first parents had violated the law of their Creator, and by the violation materially altered the condition, both of themselves and their posterity for the worse. It states further, that this unhappy change gave occasion for that interposition of God,

^a Mat. xxviii. 18.

^b Gen. iii. Rom. v. 1 Cor. xv.

which the scriptures relate to have taken place for the redemption of man. Thus the circumstances of this change in the original condition of mankind, as well as the nature and extent of the remedy provided for it, forms another most interesting and important part of the gospel system.

All these doctrines relate to subjects which evidently lie beyond the penetration of human reason, and the discoveries of human experience; to judge about them clearly, and to understand them fully, we must be supposed accurately acquainted with the entire nature of God, and of his attributes, and the mode of conduct which these attributes would lead him to adopt towards the human race, connected as it may be with his system of government over all intellectual beings. We must also be supposed capable of tracing the effects of the divine conduct on mankind, from the creation of the world till its close, and estimating whether on the whole there did not result from the series of dispensations, recorded in the scriptures, the greatest quantity of virtue and happiness which it was possible to produce, consistently with the nature of man as a moral agent, and the views of God as the moral governor of the world. Now, who does not at the first glance see that any one human being—nay, all human beings united, would be wholly incompetent to judge of these things, if left to their limited capacities and limited experience, without any instruction from divine wisdom?

dom? Who does not see that the nature of these subjects is such, that with regard to them men must be content to proceed as mere learners, convinced that they cannot discover the system of measures which God has adopted, or penetrate into the motives which determine his conduct, further than he has thought fit to disclose them? The business of reason then, in this case, is plainly confined to two points. 1st. To be fully assured of the divine authority of those who claim the character of messengers sent from God to instruct men in these mysterious subjects; and next, to take care that their instructions are rightly understood. We are however under no obligation to attend at all to doctrines on such subjects, as men could know nothing of but by revelation, till we have been satisfied that the men who advance these doctrines have been enlightened by the Divinity; antecedent therefore to any enquiry into their doctrines, we have a right to demand from them such external proofs of a divine authority as we are competent judges of. If convincing proofs are supplied, we must be satisfied that the general system of doctrines thus attested, is undoubtedly of divine original; we shall therefore proceed to examine its parts, and interpret its peculiar tenets with caution and humility, admitting as a rule of interpretation, that nothing directly contradictory to the principles of intuitive or demonstrative certainty can be true, and therefore, that if the revelation is interpreted so as to carry such a sense, it must have been misinter-

puted. But these questions cannot arise till the authority of the revelation has been previously established by external proofs ; and therefore (as it seems to me) a minute discussion of them is not necessary in a work designed to weigh the direct proofs, and examine the general authority of the gospel of Christ. The question I purpose to discuss is simply this—were the first teachers of Christianity deluded enthusiasts in believing themselves divinely inspired ? They appeal to miracles and prophecies, as proofs of a divine interposition ; were they in their belief of these facts enthusiasts ? if not, neither were they enthusiasts in their belief of those doctrines, in proof of which they appeal to these facts, and therefore all these doctrines, rightly interpreted, are unquestionably true.

The existence of doctrines in Christianity, which we do not fully comprehend, affords no presumption of their having originated in the delusions of fanaticism ; when we consider that they relate to subjects which have, in every age, exercised the penetration of the most acute and enlightened reasoners, without their having been able to form any clear and certain system relating to them, or to dispel that obscurity, which seems from their very nature to rest upon them. Thus the existence of natural and moral evil, is a fact which experience too fully testifies ; the Deist feels it as strongly as the Christian, and it forms a difficulty, a mystery, on the principles of natural religion, of which no human sagacity has yet been able

able to find an adequate solution. The difficulty of reconciling the omniscience of God with the free agency of man, is another subject which has perplexed the speculative enquirer. The unequal distribution of all natural and moral advantages amongst men, whether we consider nations or individuals, is not less difficult to account for on the principles of natural religion. We may ask a variety of questions to which the Deist can give no satisfactory answer. Why does that Being, who is the Creator and Lord of all alike, permit some nations to remain barbarous, poor, enslaved, while others are enlightened, rich and free? why are some individuals wise, strong, healthy, opulent, prosperous; others ignorant, feeble, diseased, dependent, unfortunate? and this without any regular proportion being observed, to all appearance at least, between each man's external advantages and his moral merit. These, and a variety of other similar difficulties occur, which natural religion does not solve; yet we admit the principles of natural religion, because they are founded on direct proofs, which are not refuted by our inability to comprehend the entire subject in its minuter detail. Ignorance on such a subject only shews that our faculties are inadequate to its full extent, but is no refutation of what has been positively proved.

Of the doubts and difficulties which obscure natural religion many remain undetermined and unexplained, even by revelation. Some perhaps, because it
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may have been impossible to render them clear to beings, such as men in their present state of existence; others, because though a fuller revelation were possible, it yet may have been unnecessary or inexpedient: of both these points we are evidently incompetent judges. It is however certain, that on many the most perplexing difficulties of natural religion, Christianity offers a full and satisfactory solution. Thus we are no longer startled at that inequality in the ways of Providence, so apparent in this present world, when we are assured that this life is merely a state of probation and discipline, but that in the next this inequality will be compleatly rectified; for at the awful hour of the last judgment there will be “^c no respect of persons with God.” On other points the gospel scheme offers a solution which, though connected and consistent in all its parts, yet partakes of that obscurity which the nature of the subject seems to render it impossible to avoid, while the human faculties remain in their present limited state. Thus as to the origin of evil, we are informed that moral evil was introduced on earth by man’s transgression; that death, and other natural evils, were its consequence; that as soon as it was introduced, a remedy was provided by the interposition of that divine Being, “^d without whom (it is declared) no thing was made that was made.” The mode of

^c Rom. ii. 11. ^d John i. Compare 3 and 14 verses,
Compare also Col. i. from 12 to 22.

this interposition is certainly mysterious and obscure ; but are we to wonder at this on such a subject. In many circumstances however, particularly those of a moral kind, *even we* can perceive the consistency and the advantages of this mode of interposition, obscure as it is, when metaphysically and abstractedly considered.

That the same divine Being, who created mankind, should interpose to rescue his own creation from misery and ruin, seems even to our reason natural and consistent ; that the effect of this interposition should, in a certain degree, be as extensive as the consequences of man's original transgression ; that “ as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,” while individuals shall still be responsible for their own conduct, and be judged according to the use they have made of the means of improvement afforded them—all this seems natural and consistent : that our Redeemer should appear upon earth in our own nature, to adapt his mode of instruction to that nature—to conciliate our affections, as well as rouse our fears—to guide us by example as well as by precept, and by his poverty and sufferings convince us how little estimation we should annex to mere temporal good, and teach us humility, patience and resignation—virtues the most difficult and important in this scene of trial,—all this is surely in the highest degree

‘ 1 Cor. xv. 22.

wife

wife and merciful ; that by his resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven, he should give the fullest and plainest proof of our own resurrection, and of his return to judgment, and that he being appointed to judge us, he should partake of *our* nature, that we may be as it were experimentally certain that “ ‘ he is not one who cannot be touched with the “ feeling of our infirmities, but that he was in all “ points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin”—all this is surely admirably fitted to cherish vital religion and persevering virtue, in beings so feeble and so frail as man.

Thus the Christian system of doctrines seems in many points so rational and consistent, that we cannot with any plausibility consider it as the offspring of wild fanaticism ; in others it is exceedingly mysterious and obscure ; but in those only, where from reason and experience we are led to expect mystery and obscurity ; yet even here we can discover some collateral circumstances which confirm the presumption that the whole system was founded, not on delusive visions, but on real facts. The character of our Lord as a spiritual Redeemer—his sufferings and death being a necessary part of his scheme—the effects of his interposition being designed to extend to all nations, and to form a universal religion ; the rejection of the Jews, and the abolition or sus-

† Heb. iv. 15.

pension of the Mosaic law, forming a part of that plan he came to execute.—These ideas were all so contrary to the original views and national prejudices of the apostles, so inconsistent with their religious opinions, as well as their temporal interests, that we cannot suppose they were led to adopt and to spread such doctrines by spiritual delusion or interested artifice; nor can we account for their embracing them, otherwise than by admitting that they received them in the way which they themselves state, and that they were convinced of their truth by the facts which they detail.

It is also worthy of remark, that even the most mysterious doctrines of the gospel have a direct connection with the leading facts which establish the divine original of its general scheme. If the apostles declare Christ Jesus to have been the Son of God, the Saviour of man, and the judge of the world, they at the same time relate his miracles, his instructions, his resurrection and ascension, by which they were assured of his character and dignity. If they speak of the Holy Spirit, as assisting in the work of redemption, they also testify that they themselves felt his powerful influence, in communicating to them the gift of tongues, with other miraculous powers, and visibly forwarding the diffusion of the Christian faith. If they describe in strong terms the moral corruption of mankind, the misery and degradation which arise from it, and the expediency, or even the necessity, of a divine interposition to rescue the human

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man race from its effects; the truth of these representations is notoriously and lamentably proved by the history of every nation and every age, and the self-condemning reflections of every individual, who reviews with seriousness and candour his past life, and traces the base and unworthy motives which too frequently mix with and pollute even his very best actions. Shall we then reject a system, which lays its foundation on a fact so undeniable as the corruption of man, and which offers a scheme of redemption, the efficacy of which is established by proofs so clear as those which support the Christian faith: shall we, I say, reject this system as wild and fanatical, merely because we cannot comprehend the exact mode in which this divine interposition produces its effects, or the precise degree to which its efficacy extends; surely this would be at once most arrogant and irrational.

To conclude this view of the speculative doctrines of the gospel,—It is easy to observe, that even the most mysterious of them are introduced in a MANNER very different from that in which experience proves to us fanatics would have introduced them; they are not stated to have been conveyed to the apostles in direct visions, or sudden extasies and illuminations, unconnected with any real history, and separated from all the events and circumstances of their common life. No—we find this system of doctrines was *gradually* introduced by our Lord, in his different parables and discourses;

discourses ; that it appears the apostles were strongly prejudiced against it, and extremely slow to receive, and dull in understanding it, but that their gracious Lord gently combated and gradually dispelled their prejudices, and made way for that more full knowledge of the gospel scheme, which they received by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost ; still, however, that part of it which offered most violence to their original prejudices, the admission of the Gentiles to the church of Christ, was not yet fully and universally admitted, but required yet more direct communication and proofs to secure its constant and cordial reception : Now, does not this process look very unlike the chimerical and unconnected delusions of fanaticism ? does it not bear the strongest marks of nature and reality ?

It should also be remembered, that as we find the most mysterious doctrines of the gospel are intermingled and connected with the facts of the history, and form part of our Lord's parables and discourses, so they are also perpetually interwoven in the epistles of St. Paul, and the other apostles, which, in their general style and structure, are so natural and rational, so exactly adapted to the character and situation of the persons by whom they were composed, as well as of those to whom they were addressed, as to bear the plainest marks of truth and soberness ; and can we believe this of the moral and historical parts of the New Testament, and yet suppose that the doctrinal
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parts of the very same histories and epistles are the effusions of wild fanaticism? surely this were utterly incredible.

The *language* and the *temper* in which even the most mysterious doctrines of the gospel are conveyed, is also totally different from that which we universally find distinguishes the compositions of enthusiasts. In the instructions of the apostles we find all is moderate though earnest, and though dignified not proud; they betray no marks of their conceiving themselves exalted above all mankind, because they were the only human beings whom the Divinity vouchsafed to enlighten with these mysterious truths. The apostles rather seem to reflect on their situation with self-abasement, and awful apprehension, as entrusted with the ministry of the word, for the right discharge of which they would be called to answer before the tribunal of their Lord. This is the idea constantly predominant in their minds;—" * Though I preach the gospel (says " St. Paul) I have nothing to glory of, for necessity " is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach " not the gospel; for if I do this thing willingly I " have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensa- " tion of the gospel is committed unto me—what " is my reward then? verily, that when I preach " the gospel I may make the gospel of Christ " without charge (i. e. *without receiving any* " *pecuniary recompence from those to whom I preach*).

* 1 Cor. ix. 16.

“ that I abuse not my power in the gospel.” Here we see the warmth and disinterestedness of sincerity ; but do we not also see a humility utterly remote from fanaticism : thus again speaking of the resurrection of Christ ; “ ^b last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time ; for I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God ; but by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

St. Peter also, when addressing an exhortation to the ministers of the Christian church, and designing to apprise them of the full dignity of their office, as an incitement to greater activity, writes thus :—
 “ ⁱ The elders which are among you I exhort, who also am an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed : feed the flock of Christ which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly ; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind ; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock ; and when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away.”

^b 1 Cor. xv. 8.

ⁱ 1 Peter v. 1, &c.

Here is a due sense of the dignity of the ministerial character, and the reward which will attend its faithful discharge ; but surely this is combined, not only with such disinterestedness as precludes all suspicion of deceit, but with such humility and calmness as is entirely free from the pride and the extravagance of fanaticism.

Finally, if we compare the writings of the apostles, even such parts of them as frequently and strongly inculcate the most mysterious doctrines of the gospel, with the compositions of those fanatics, who in after ages corrupted and disgraced Christianity, nothing is more striking than the *wide difference in manner*, even where the same doctrines form the subject of both. In the one, what calmness, what dignity, what humility, what charity, to those who differ from them—what earnest zeal to promote virtue and brotherly love ; in the other, what heat and extravagance, what self-exaltation and bitterness, what direct condemnation of all who deny or even dispute their imperious dogmas. In a word, how plainly does the one prove itself the offspring of that wisdom which “ descended from above, which is full of mercy and “ good fruits ;” while the other betrays the influence of spiritual delusion working on spiritual pride, and displaying in its effects foul marks of the earthly and corrupted source from whence it springs.

C O N C L U S I O N.

WE have now examined the various circumstances which would have detected the influence of enthusiasm in the first teachers of Christianity, if it had in any degree existed ; and it has, I trust, appeared that they were totally exempt from its dominion. The FACTS which determined them to follow their Lord during his life, and after his death to maintain his resurrection and divinity, were so plain and certain, so contrary to their original expectations, and received with such slowness and caution, as fully exempt the apostles from all suspicion of being the dupes of delusion and credulity. We have also seen that the miracles which they wrought to convert men to the belief of the gospel were so great and unquestionable, the proofs they employed so just and consistent, that no fanaticism could have gained credit to such facts or suggested such reasonings.

And as they were thus evidently free from the two essential and leading characters of enthusiasm, credulity and dogmatism, so also they betray none of those minuter marks of weakness or extravagance which detect that want of discretion and soberness of mind ever attendant on fanaticism. Their CONDUCT discovers nothing of the melancholy, the austerity, or
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the abstraction of enthusiasts; nothing of that contempt of order and propriety which such men ever display: all their actions were consistent with reason and directed by utility—intrepid and persevering, but cool and steady, in preaching the gospel, they guarded their safety and reputation, as far as was consistent with their sacred work; if they despised the favour of man, it was only when they could not obtain it without violating their duty to God; if they cheerfully encountered shame, and suffering, and death, it was to secure themselves, and lead mankind to obtain the rewards of an eternal life.

And as in their private conduct and views they were rational and sober, in the government of the church they were prudent and cautious, mild and decorous, zealous without violence, and steady without obstinacy; they were ever careful to avoid every occasion of offence, and prompt to conciliate and concede, as far as concession was justifiable, making due allowance for every prejudice, and guarding against every cause of dissension; they provided wisely and effectually for the edification and harmony, the rapid spread and the permanent security of the church of Christ.

Nor do their WRITINGS breath the spirit of sobriety less evidently than their lives. The stile of fanatics is ever obscure, arrogant and violent; the stile of the New Testament is the very reverse of this—the historical

rical writings plain and calm, and unexaggerated, detailing the facts which establish the unparalleled perfection of their divine Lord with the particularity and consistency of truth, and the most signal coolness and impartiality; while their epistles are in the highest degree natural, rational and affectionate, suited to the occasions which produced them, and the relation which the writers bore to the different persons whom they addressed—instructing their ignorance and encouraging their virtues—rebuking their offences without bitterness—vindicating their own characters from calumny, without betraying any excessive resentment—and maintaining their own authority, as religious instructors and guides, without any trace of spiritual pride, any arrogant claims to full perfection of virtue.

Next to the stile and subject matter of their writings, we have examined the nature of the several *moral precepts* they deliver, and this has appeared most strongly contrasted with the errors of fanaticism. Men infected with this, ever neglect or corrupt morality; their devotion is gloomy and extravagant—their principles of social conduct unnatural and erroneous—their ideas of personal merit and self-regulation wild, harsh and impracticable: the morality of the gospel is utterly free from all these defects, and eminently distinguished by the opposite excellencies; teaching heart-felt piety to God, without any affecta-

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tion of rapturous extacy or extravagant fervor—a piety chastened and controuled by discretion and humility. We perceive that its just pre-eminence is allowed to internal sincerity, while to outward rites and observances their due importance is preserved; every virtue has its just order and value in the Christian scheme—every social duty is taught in the clearest manner, and enforced by the strongest motives—towards our neighbour strict equity and active benevolence is inculcated; while the mind is trained to rational and habitual self-government, founded on piety, promotive of internal purity, and leading by constant vigilance to final perfection.

Such is the system of Christian morality. Surely such a system as this, not only could not have been the offspring of wild, senseless fanaticism, but so far transcended all preceding efforts of human reason, as well as all natural powers and attainments of its authors, that it can scarcely be ascribed to any source but the dictates of divine wisdom providing for human happiness.

To this system of morality the gospel adds a scheme of speculative doctrines, in which every certain truth of natural religion is maintained in the strongest manner, is confirmed by new proofs, and placed in the clearest light; and in which all doubts as to our present relation to God, and our future expectations,

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are decided exactly in that way which coincides with the opinions of the most enlightened reason, and best promotes the interests of virtue and religion, and this undebased by any mixture of those fictions and extravagancies which fanaticism would almost inevitably have dictated; and even the most abstruse and mysterious doctrines of the Christian scheme do not appear to have been such as were likely to originate in any delusions of imagination, but rather such as were directly connected with, and evidently grounded on the plain facts of the gospel history, and thence clearly supported by a divine authority.

It should not be forgotten, that in the course of this enquiry many facts and circumstances have forced on our observance the sincerity and integrity of our Lord and his apostles, their compleat freedom from all mercenary and ambitious, all narrow and interested views, so that it seems to be established beyond controversy, that they were neither deceivers, nor deceived; and if this is admitted, the facts they attest are certainly true, and as certainly Christianity is of divine original.

It deserves also to be noticed, that many circumstances have accidentally occurred in the course of this enquiry confirming, in the strongest manner, the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, the particularity and consistency of the gospels, the
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references in the epistles to private, and local, and domestic particulars, their containing answers to questions and letters ~~from~~ the persons to whom they are addressed: these and a variety of other particulars, render it almost wholly incredible that these epistles should not have been the writings of the apostles whose names they bear; and if so, the whole series of facts on which Christianity rests, is established beyond the possibility of doubt.

Indeed the supposition that the New Testament was not genuine and authentic, carries with it inextricable difficulties: whoever were its authors, their system of morality proves they were in the highest degree pious, honest and rational, anxious for the improvement of mankind in purity and virtue, justice and benevolence; and how is it possible to reconcile with this the idea of their being guilty of the grossest forgery, and imposing upon the world the most atrocious and impious falsehoods as to the divine conduct and divine dispensations; leading men to adore a crucified deceiver as the Son of God and Judge of the world?

The true reason why men are not sufficiently impressed with the view of the direct evidence of the gospel is, that they do not sufficiently reflect on the extreme absurdities and contradictions they must fall into if they deny the force of that evidence; they
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only attend to the objections which they conceive lie against the admission of Christianity, but reflect not on the infinitely greater difficulties which attend its rejection ; there is no medium between believing the gospel to be entirely false or entirely true ; either its authors were what they claim to be, messengers from God, or they were the grossest impostors, and at the same time the wildest fanatics that ever appeared in the world ; deceivers and fanatics to such a degree as involves a direct contradiction. In truth, on this supposition every thing is contradiction and perplexity ; the improvements on all former schemes of morality and religion, which the teachers of the gospel introduced, are unaccountable—their steadiness in encountering shame and persecution is unaccountable—their success in reforming the Jews and Heathens, in overturning that gross system of idolatry, which was supported by the people, the priests, and the emperors, is unaccountable. Finally, it is wholly unaccountable how fanatics or deceivers should have instituted a scheme of religion which has survived the ruins of the Roman empire, which, though corrupted and debased by the ignorance and superstition of those dark ages which succeeded, carried in itself the means of detecting these corruptions, and reforming those abuses : a religion which, though it has been the subject of more violent opposition, more close investigation, and more acute objection, than the human mind ever has employed on any

any other subject, has yet sustained this fiery trial, and still remains unshaken and unconfuted :—a religion which inspires the noblest hopes, and supports the purest virtues that can adorn the human mind, which, so far as it has prevailed, has softened the manners and reformed the vices of mankind, and which, whenever it has been neglected, abused, or forsaken, has proved its excellence by the very vices and miseries which have attended, and chastised such perversion and apostacy.

Such is the religion, whose divine original, as I am myself from my heart convinced of, I have in the preceding work endeavoured to illustrate and defend ; and if it is indeed of divine original, it is assuredly the first duty of every human being, to whose acceptance it is offered, to examine it with candid attention, and when satisfied of its truth, to receive it with humble reverence—to practice what is plain, and believe what is clearly revealed—to examine with humility, and interpret with caution whatever may appear doubtful and obscure—to acquiesce in the ignorance of what divine wisdom has not judged it necessary for man clearly to understand, but to be careful to improve the instructions it has deigned to bestow.

Thus received, and thus improved, Christianity will calm our passions, strengthen our self-government,

ment, exalt our piety, and expand our benevolence ; it will prove the never-failing source of consolation and hope, amidst the changes and chances, the pains and sorrows of this transitory life : in the gloom of death it will open to us the bright prospects of life and immortality, and secure to us from its divine Author, our Redeemer and our Judge, the enjoyment of still encreasing happiness through all eternity.

F I N I S.

1891

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very long letter, and it contains a great deal of information about the state of the country at that time. It is a very important document, and it is one of the most interesting documents in the collection.

[Faint, illegible text from bleed-through]

This receipt will show the amount of money
received by the patient, and the date of payment.

A P P E N D I X.

THIS Appendix is intended chiefly for the use of my younger readers, to point out some references which may guide them to more full information on points touched on in the preceding work, a particular detail of which the nature of its principal subject did not seem to require. It also contains some remarks which either have occurred since the preceding sheets were printed, or which were not so closely connected with the subject of the essay, as to admit of their being inserted in the text.

Note on page 8.—“He had practised no religious
“austerity to excite veneration.”

It may perhaps be objected, that though our Lord had not done this, yet John the Baptist, his forerunner, had. But in proof that this opposition in their external characters, far from supplying any just suspicion of collusion or deceit, confirms very strongly the truth of the claims of both to a divine authority, vid. Bell's Divine Mission of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ, part 3, sect. 2, p. 245, of the second edition. The whole of this work is well worthy the attention of the serious enquirer.

“Observations on our Lord's requiring faith before he performed his miracles, on his desiring them to be concealed, and his refusing a sign to the Pharisees, &c.”—Vid. *supra*, p. 15.

“In every instance, when we find such faith required, it is plain from the history, that the person of whom it was re-

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quired,

" quired, must have had opportunities of being fully assured
 " of our Lord's supernatural power and gracious mercy in ex-
 " erting it." This requires particular proof. The first in-
 stance in which we find faith at all required, before our Lord
 performed the miracle implored of him, occurs in John, 4th
 chapter, 48th verse, when he returned from the feast of the
 passover, at which " many believed on his name, beholding
 " the miracles which he did," to Cana of Galilee, which had
 been the scene of his first miracle, and the inhabitants of which
 " received him, having seen all things which he had done in
 " Jerusalem at the feast." Here a nobleman, whose son
 lay sick at Capernaum, applied to him " to come down and
 " heal his son, for he was at the point of death." Our Lord
 answers, " except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe."
 And the nobleman's reply proves that his application proceed-
 ed rather from an anxious hope that he, by whom he had seen
 or heard such miracles were wrought, might perhaps have
 power to rescue the object of his affections from impending
 death, than from such firm confidence as the experience of past
 miracles ought to have excited in a candid mind. His words
 are remarkable; he neither asserts the firmness of his faith,
 nor confesses or deploras his want of it, but repeats his request
 with increasing urgency, " Lord come down ere my child die,"
 fearing, as it seems, that to recall him from death our Lord's
 power extended not. Jesus chooses that mode of performing
 the miracle which should most decidedly shew these doubts
 were not incorrigible. Instead of accompanying him to see
 his son, as he had desired, he says, " go thy way, thy son
 " liveth; and the man believed and went his way, and that
 " very hour the fever left his son." Do not these circumstances
 clearly point out the propriety of our Lord's noticing, with
 some degree of censure, his previous weakness of faith?

An instance in which the want of faith was censured, was
 in the apostles themselves, when our Lord was * asleep in
 the ship with them, and a storm filled them with excessive ter-
 ror. Now, surely they who had been a great length of time
 witnesses of his miracles (for this was after the second passover

* Vid. Matt. viii. 24. Mark iv. 38.

in our Lord's ministry) ought not to have entertained any such fears.

Another instance of our Lord's requiring faith was in Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue at Capernaum, who applied to him to heal his daughter who was dying. He must have seen many instances of our Lord's power in Capernaum, the frequent residence of our Lord; and at that very hour, when our Lord was going to his house, he healed a woman of an inveterate issue of blood; and it is remarkable, that a message had been sent to Jairus, implying a distrust of our Lord's power, for one came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him "thy daughter is dead, why troublest thou the Master?" On this message it was that Jesus answered the ruler, saying, "fear not, only believe, and she shall be made whole." This was a gracious encouragement, not an unreasonable requisition. Very soon after this resurrection was noised abroad, † two blind men applied to be healed, and of them also our Lord demands, "believe ye that I am able to do this." They also had previous opportunities of being convinced of the divine power of Jesus.

Another instance occurs in the † Syro-Phœnician woman, who, though a Gentile, applied to him on hearing of his marvellous power. Our Lord put her faith to the severest test, but the design of this was evidently to convince the prejudiced Jews that the Heathens might be much more worthy of enjoying the benefits of his favour than themselves.

Another instance was, when his disciples failed in curing a § child, whose father had implored their interference. The afflicted parent, almost in despair, applied to our Lord, "if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus said unto him, "if thou canst believe, all things are possible unto him that believeth; and straightway the father of the child cried out and said, with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." This surely was as gracious as it was dignified, on the part of our Lord.

* Mark v. 21, to the end. Newcome's Harmony, sect. 52.

† Vid. Matt. ix. 27—31. Newcome's Harmony, sect. 53.

‡ Matt. xv. 22—28. Mark vii. 24—30.

§ Vid. Matt. xvii. 24. Mark ix. 14. Luke ix. 37.

Finally, in all instances when faith was required, it was from those who deliberately and voluntarily applied to our Lord. Now, if such applications proceeded from idle curiosity, or insincere hearts, ought they to have been complied with? was not therefore an avowal of their sincere faith natural and reasonable, before our Lord would exert his divine power in their behalf.

The real motive of our Lord in withholding his miracles, we shall be instructed in, by observing, that the inhabitants of Nazareth, amongst whom our Lord did not perform many miracles, were of dispositions so selfish, proud and malignant, that on his appealing to the practice of the prophets, to justify his exercising his power for the benefit of those who were not of his own country, they were "filled with wrath," and made an attempt on his life, to escape from which he exercised a supernatural power; "for they * led him to the brow of the hill, on " which their city was built, to cast him down headlong, but he " passing through the midst of them, went his way :"—doubtless by rendering himself invisible. Thus they received a proof of his power in such a way as they merited, not by his indulging their curiosity or their pride, but by exposing and defeating their obstinate selfishness, and base malignity.

The priests and Pharisees, to whom our Lord refused the sign they sought, were of such dispositions, that † they had immediately before imputed his miracles to the operation of Satan, and long after, when they were informed of the awful resurrection of Lazarus, and the multitude who believed on our Lord in consequence, far from being convinced, they were only the more enraged, "they took counsel to put him to " death," and not only our Lord, but Lazarus himself, " because, that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, " and believed upon Jesus." Herod also, who was glad to see our Lord at his last trial, "hoping to see some miracle done " by him," was that same Herod, who had murdered John the Baptist, and who continued to live in that state of incest and adultery, by rebuking him for which the Baptist had incurred his resentment. Such were the characters in whom our Lord did not

* Luke iv. 29.

† Vid. Matt. xii. and John xi 47.

find such dispositions, as induced him to work miracles for their particular advantage or conviction ; and is this wonderful ?

For a full account of the reasons for our Lord's *concealing* his miracles, consult Primate Newcome's Observations on his Conduct and Character, part 1, chap. iii. sect. 3. Whence it appears he concealed them only from the Jews, and from them only, when urged by the most weighty motives, when they had immediately before attempted his life, or when they had attempted to take him by force and make him a king ; or imputed his miracles to Satan ; or that the reality of the miracle might be judicially ascertained by an impartial examination of it, as in the * case of the lepers ; or when it was necessary to avoid giving occasion for tumults, or to prevent individuals from being persecuted in consequence of receiving his miraculous aid.—Vide also Randolph's Christian's Faith a Rational Assent. p. 166 to 172.

P. 22. "The sea of Galilee."

For the principal cause why the country about this sea became so much the scene of our Lord's residence, see Matt. iv. 13.—In proof that the miracles and conduct of our Lord were submitted to a full and public scrutiny, from the extreme populousness of the country, and the number of large towns and villages it contained, vid. Dr. Macknight's Harmony of the Gospels, vol. 2, p. 100, of the 2d edit. in his comment on the above passage of Matthew.—Vid. Josephus de Bello Judaico, lib. 3, chap. iii. sect. 2. in attestation of the great populousness of the country.

P. 27.—"Remarks on the cure of the man born blind, and some other miracles."

In the cure of the man born blind it is related, that Jesus "† spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, go wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation sent) ; he went his way therefore and washed, and came seeing." On this unbelievers object that this

* Vid. Luke v. 12, 14.

† John ix. 1—7.

process,

process, if it was necessary to the cure, looks like the application of some hidden means of art. If unnecessary, they arraign it as in the mode improper, and even ridiculous.

In proof that no hidden means of art could have effected this cure, since no such means could have wrought a miracle on the mind, so as instantaneously to infuse that power of using the organs of sight, and judging by them of external objects—a power which experience only can supply, and which a man born blind could not possess, consult Dr. Elrington's Sermons on Miracles, from p. 115 to 128—and Dr. Drought's Comment on the Account of the gradual Cure related by St. Mark, in the Appendix to the same work, p. 263. It remains to examine whether we can discover any propriety in this mode of performing the miracle. To judge of this we may observe, that the only instances besides this, in which our Lord is represented as using any external application whatsoever, or curing by any means except a word, or the touch of his finger, or his garment, are the following—

“ * Another blind man, near Bethsaida, whom they brought unto him, and besought him to touch him ; and he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town, and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him, if he saw ought ? and he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up, and he was restored, and he saw every man clearly ; and he sent him away to his own house, saying, neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town”—

And somewhat a similar mode did our Lord adopt in the case of a man, “ whom they brought † unto him, (near the sea of Gallilee) who was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, and they beseech him to put his hands upon him ; and he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue, and, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, be opened, and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he speak plain ; and he charged them that they should tell no

* Mark viii. 23—26.

† Mark vii. 32—37.

“ man ;

“ man; but the more he charged them, so much the more a
 “ great deal they published it, and were beyond measure
 “ astonished, saying, he hath done all things well, he maketh
 “ both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.”

These three are the only instances where a *deliberate external application* is related to have been used, and in all these cases the reason for using it seems to have been *one and the same, even to convey to the individuals, on whom the miracles were performed, a clear assurance that Jesus was the person at whose command, and by whose agency the cure was wrought, and to enable them to state to others the grounds of this assurance fully and circumstantially.*

For this purpose our Saviour used such a mode of application as was best calculated to make an impression on the senses these men possessed, unimpaired, antecedent to the miracle, and such as led them to observe, that he was about to interpose, in order to perfect those organs which were defective. A little attention will shew that every circumstance in the different modes of application had this tendency.

A blind man can know another only by the voice or the touch. The blind man near Bethsaida our Lord led out of the town remote from the crowd, that he might be sure of the person who spoke to or touched him; he then spat on his eyes, and laid his hands on him, and restored him to sight, though imperfectly—after that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and he saw clearly. What possible mode could give him a more full assurance that the cure was wrought by the interposition of an external agent, and that Jesus was that agent. The deaf man could judge of the intentions of another only by seeing what he does, him therefore our Lord took aside from the multitude, that he might fix and confine his attention to himself, and then he put his fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue, thus signifying to him that he intended to produce some change in these organs; he then looked up to heaven, at the same time speaking, to signify the change would proceed from a divine power, exercised at his interposition.

The very same purpose was equally answered by our Lord's application to the eyes of the man born blind; it assured him that the person who came close to him, and spoke to him, and anointed his eyes, was the sole agent, by whose interposition the

the cure was wrought. Immediately, on approaching our Saviour, after receiving his sight, he must have recognized him by his voice. Had the grounds of his assurance been less full and circumstantial, he never could have so unanswerably silenced the objections, and replied, to the captious queries of the Pharisees—"What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes?—He answered, and said, "a man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, go to the pool of Siloam, and wash, and I went and washed, and I received sight."

We may be confirmed in believing this to have been the design of these external applications, by observing, that they were used in no instance except those of blindness and deafness, when a defect of the senses rendered them necessary to convey such assurance of Jesus having been the author of the miracle. And still more, by observing that it does not appear that any of these three men had any previous knowledge of our Saviour's power and character. The man born blind he healed without any solicitation. The blind man at Bethsaida, and the deaf man, do not appear to have come of themselves, they were brought by their friends; more precaution was therefore necessary to call their attention to the person by whom the miracle was wrought, and give them full evidence that it was his sole work. When the two blind men at Capernaum, and two others near Jericho, applied to our Saviour to be healed, it was with a declared previous conviction of his divine power, they followed him, crying, "Son of David have mercy upon us." Here therefore a less remarkable external application was sufficient, as they professed their belief; Jesus only required that this profession should be sincere. "Believe ye, said he, that I have the power to do this? and they said, yea Lord; then he touched their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you; and their eyes were opened."

If these remarks are just, they exhibit one of those numberless cases, where incidents apparently minute and objectionable, when well considered, display the miraculous nature of the facts, and the admirable propriety of our Lord's conduct in every circumstance; and every such instance confirms strongly the conclusion, that our Lord's miracles were not delusive visions, or the extravagancies of a wild and senseless fanatic, but plain

plain proofs of a divine power, exhibited with the sobriety and dignity becoming his divine character. This their close connection with the subject of the foregoing discourse will, it is hoped, apologize for the length to which these remarks have extended.

P. 44.—“ They had been chosen as peculiar witnesses of the resurrection of their Lord.”

Mr. Paine having revived this objection, of our Lord's not appearing publicly to all the Jews, and stated it as unanswerable, I wish briefly to observe that the apostles were surely the best possible witnesses; they were perfectly familiar with him, and could not be deceived as to his identity; they sacrificed every temporal interest in confirming their testimony, and must have been sincere; but yet their testimony has been sometimes set aside as nugatory, because our Lord did not appear publicly to all the Jews; that is, *sufficient* evidence is rejected because we are not gratified with evidence of a quite different nature. But had our Lord appeared publicly, let us for a moment consider what would probably have been the effect? The Jews saw Lazarus publicly raised; yet they were not convinced; they were not influenced by our Lord's multiplied miracles, because he did not appear as a temporal Messiah. Had this disposition remained, either they would have rejected our Lord, though convinced of his resurrection, and their rejection would have been cited as evidence directly contradictory to that of the apostles; or if they received him, it would have been as a temporal Redeemer, and this would have been imputed to temporal motives, to the artifice of the rulers, and the national prejudices of the people favouring the views of a political deceiver. Or if we take a third supposition, and suppose the whole nation to have received Jesus in his true character of a spiritual Redeemer, yet here also their assent would be imputed to national pride, flattered by being the authors of an universal religion. We would have no proof of the reality of the miracles wrought by our Lord, and his apostles, because they would have undergone no scrutiny, since all the spectators would have been friends. We would have no certainty that the prophecies were not altered to accommodate

commodate them to events which that nation, the principal depositary of these predictions, universally wished to persuade mankind formed their accomplishment, and we should lose the chief proof of the disinterestedness and steadiness of the apostles' testimony, for they would have had the whole body of the nation to support their pretensions to the high rank of divine teachers, and to guard them from the hazard of persecution, or console them by sharing their martyrdom as the glory of their race. How truly may we here apply what my learned friend already quoted has advanced on another similar argument. "When will the failure of every attempt at contriving a system of evidence, better adapted to the support of Christianity than that on which it rests, convince its adversaries that it derives its origin from more than human wisdom?" Elrington's Sermons, p. 185. Vide, on this subject, Randolph's Christian Faith a Rational Assent, from p. 173 to 178. The Trial of the Witnesses, p. 76 to 82. Sequel to the Trial, p. 136. Macknight's Harmony, sect. 158. The Commentators on Acts x. 41, particularly Dodd's useful Compilation. If the reader wishes to consult more authors on this subject, he will find them enumerated in Doddridge's Lectures, part 6, prop. 108, Schol. 1, p. 471 of the 1st vol. of Dr. Kippis's edition.

For answers to objections against the resurrection, from our Lord's seeming to appear or disappear suddenly, &c. as in Luke xxiv. 16—31 and 36. John xx. 17—19 and 26, consult West on the Resurrection, p. 140 to 147, 3d Dublin edition—and the Commentators on these passages.

To reconcile the apparent discrepancies in the accounts of the evangelists, concerning the resurrection, consult the Harmony of Dr. Benson, adopted and confirmed by Primate Newcome, in his Review of Difficulties concerning the resurrection.

West, Lardner, Townson, and many others, have written largely on this subject; let me add the name of a student of this University, Thomas Cranfield, A. B. who, in 1795, published a sensible tract on this subject.

P. 47.—“ The conversion of St. Paul.”

Lord Lytleton has treated the fact of St. Paul's own conversion fully, and has proved so clearly, it could not be accounted for, on the supposition, either of fraud or fanaticism, that I have not dwelt on this fact in particular; I only quote such of his arguments as illustrate the general nature of the evidence, which the miracles of the apostles supplied. Vid. Littleton's Conversion of St. Paul, p. 55.

P. 49.—“ Give directions for their more orderly
“ use in their assemblies.”

For a full account of the nature of the spiritual gifts of the first converts, their necessity and their certainty, consult the Essay on the Teaching and Witness of the Holy Spirit, in Lord Barrington's *Miscellanea Sacra*, vol. 1st. re-printed by Bishop Watson, in the 4th vol. of his *Theological Tracts*. Vide particularly from p. 375 to 413, and 436 to 454.

The great difficulty and importance of this subject prevents me from attempting to give any abridgement of this excellent essay, which I strongly recommend to every serious enquirer. One passage I will quote, for the purpose of adducing a remark on it more peculiarly connected with my present subject. Lord Barrington * distinguishes, I think very justly, “ the working of miracles, healing diseases, and casting out devils, from those which were more strictly termed, *gifts of the Holy Ghost*, which St. Paul sums up under the heads of knowledge and utterance. But though † I apprehend, says he, “ all the gifts of the Holy Ghost in their strict acceptation, or “ the gifts that were peculiar to the dispensation of the spirit “ consisted in illumination, yet I apprehend that that illumination was of two kinds; the one was an illumination of such “ a nature as conveyed a system, an art, or skill; the other was “ an illumination in a particular instance, *pro re nata*, and that “ only served the present purpose and occasion.”

This distinction seems to me exceedingly just, as well as extremely important. † I conceive with Lord Barrington, that the power of healing diseases, and casting out devils, was, in the

* Vid. Watson's Tracts, vol. 4, p. 400 to 404.

† Vid. Lord Barrington, p. 406.

† Ibid. 402.

apostles of this latter kind, occasional and temporary, to the exercise of which they were directed by the same divine impulse, which at the moment gave them the power to exercise it. Of this we have many proofs in the New Testament. The gift of healing, for instance, was not exercised by the apostles at will; for if so, we can hardly suppose that St. Paul would not have employed it for the advantage of Timothy, who laboured under “ * many infirmities ;” or of “ *Trophimus, whom he left at Miletus sick ;*” and that he was equally limited in the power of foreseeing or predicting future events, is proved in this work, chap. ii. sect. 3, p. 75 to 78. But the gift of tongues, of the interpretation of tongues, of knowledge, of wisdom, of prayer, of those gifts suited to the apostles, evangelists, teachers, presbyters, deacons, and other stated offices in the church of Christ, when communicated, *were permanent*. Now, if we admit this distinction, we shall, as it seems to me, perceive that the *disorderly use of spiritual gifts*, which is said to have taken place in the religious assemblies of the Corinthian church, *is perfectly consistent with their supernatural original*. The gift of healing could not be abused, nor that of inflicting miraculous punishment, which the apostles on some occasions exercised, because the particular instance and mode in which they were exercised, were determined by the very same divine impulse, which communicated the power to perform these miracles. With the gift of prophecy it was otherwise, because though the foreknowledge of a future event was supernaturally communicated; yet when the knowledge was infused into the mind of the prophet, he was still a free agent as to the season and mode of communicating that knowledge to others. “ † The spirits of the “ prophets (says St. Paul) ‡ are subject to the prophets; for God “ is not the author of confusion, but peace in the churches”—that is, the prophets are not mere machines to proclaim the dictates of inspiration, for this would resemble the effects of fanatical delirium and convulsions, but free agents, able to select the occasion and mode of communicating the supernatural knowledge they possessed soberly and orderly; but as men were

* 1 Tim. v. 23. 2 Tim. iv. 20. † 1 Cor. xiv. 32.

‡ The observation of St. Paul in this passage applies to *teachers*, which the original signifies, but it is not the less important in our present argument.

not rendered infallible or impeccable, by possessing prophetic knowledge, they may be conceived to be led away by impatience, or even by ostentation, to choose an unseasonable time or manner of communicating it, though in whatever manner communicated, it could not fail of appearing supernatural, and therefore of evincing the divine original of that religion, to establish which it was employed. What is here observed of prophecy, is much more obviously true of other spiritual gifts of a more permanent, and, if I may express it so, of a more independent nature. The person to whom the knowledge of a new language was supernaturally communicated, must be conceived to employ this knowledge, without being in every particular instance of his doing so, supernaturally or forcibly over-ruled, and therefore may be conceived to have employed it in an unseasonable or irregular manner; still, however, it would on the whole facilitate the diffusion, and prove the divine original of the gospel. St. Paul seems, in his address to the Corinthians on this subject, to distinguish clearly between the perfection of morals, piety and wisdom, and the possession of spiritual gifts, and to represent humility, self-government and vigilance, as necessary to the religious improvement and final salvation, even of those who were endowed with spiritual gifts of the most exalted and wonderful kind. Hence he * exhorts those who were so endowed, "not to be puffed up, not to contend with each other for pre-eminence; he exhorts them to "prefer charity to all, &c." Such is the view which the scripture exhibits to us of these gifts, which had, indeed, God for their author, but were dispensed through the medium of men, who could not but remain liable to sin and error.

Is not this representation equally free from the falsehood of hypocrisy, which would conceal the errors and failings it could not but perceive, and from the blind presumption of fanaticism, which would not perceive any such errors or failings to exist? Does it not bear the plainest characters of truth and nature, and add one to those numberless instances of circumstances which, at first sight, appear strongly objectionable, but which, on a closer view, are found to prove confirmations of the truth and divinity of the gospel scheme?

* Vid. 1 Cor. xii. xiii. xiv.

If the reader wishes for further information on this subject, he may consult Warburton's *Doctrine of Grace*, the five first chapters. Dr. Samuel Chandler's *Sermons*, vol. 1, Sermons 12th, 13th, and 14th, on the Descent of the Holy Spirit, &c. and Leland's *Answer to Morgan*, chap. 13th.

“ Observations on the community of goods, and the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira.”

It may be satisfactory to my younger readers to present them the following remarks, on the community of goods amongst the first Christians at Jerusalem, collected from some of the best commentators.

There seems to have been peculiar reasons which made this community of goods eligible at that time in Jerusalem. There were many strangers, who had come from great distances to the feast of Pentecost, and who would naturally be desirous to continue there much longer than they originally intended, in order to gain a thorough knowledge of the gospel, which they had recently embraced; these would have a strong claim on the pious generosity of their fellow Christians, who were inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The apostles, and all the Christians, knew that Jesus had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem would take place before that generation was passed away; and therefore they may have thought it proper, while there was an opportunity, to improve to the best use their estates, which they could not long enjoy, by relieving their poorer brethren, and by enabling the first teachers to pursue their travels from place to place.

Many also of the apostles, and others, who (like Barnabas) resolved to devote their whole future lives to preaching the gospel, would not want, in the execution of this task, more than the immediate necessities of life, and would naturally devote their property to the same cause. And indeed they could but ill attend to the care of any property, while travelling and preaching to disseminate the gospel.

This surrender of the goods of each individual to the common stock, was wholly unconstrained. What St. Peter says to Ananias was true of all;—“while the land remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?”

They

They who gave up their goods had a right to claim support from the common stock. "Distribution was made unto every man, as he had need." The number of believers at Jerusalem was so great, that the share of each would be inconsiderable, much too inconsiderable to induce the least suspicion, that converts could be allured by it; and it should not be forgot, that if this community of goods had been made a *condition* of *Christianity*, it would effectually deter the rich, and thus defeat itself.

It is beyond doubt this practice was never recommended for general adoption by any of the apostles. Bounty to the poor, and a just attention to the wants of the ministers of the gospel, are frequently inculcated, particularly by St. Paul, who yet seems never to have used any supply of this kind, when he could possibly subsist by his own labour; for when he most strongly enforces this right, in 1 Cor. ix. he has this remarkable appeal—"even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel; but I have used none of these things, neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void; for though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of, for necessity is laid upon me—yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel, for if I do this thing willingly I have my reward; but, if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; what is my reward then? Verily, that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." I might ask, is not this equally remote from enthusiasm and imposture? Would an enthusiast thus justify in others a principle which he would not carry into practice himself? or, would an impostor fail to carry such a principle into practice?

I cannot avoid thinking that scarce any but perverted minds, could harbour a suspicion against the apostles, on account of this circumstance. They all lived a life of poverty, toil and danger, and many of them died a death of torture, in order to teach the most exalted piety, and most disinterested virtue; and shall we suspect them of being interested men, because for some time they presided over the distribution of a charitable fund, which they
very

very soon refused to do, alledging that it took up too much of their time from preaching the gospel; and commanded the society to nominate other persons to manage it. What grounds are here for suspicion,

This community of goods is one of the many facts which are most unaccountable, if the miraculous part of the relation is false, most natural if this be true. What but the plain notoriety of these miracles could have such an influence on the richest, and therefore the most enlightened proselytes? In a system of cunning and deceit, is it likely this description of men would be the first and greatest dupes, and the ignorant multitude the first to profit by the deceit?

But if we admit the truth of the history, all is natural; the rapid succession of amazing discoveries and stupendous miracles; the full and sensible assurance of a future life and judgment; would so overpower men's minds, as to render all the concerns of this life insignificant in their estimation, and would naturally produce the effect described in the Acts, which would be infinitely less likely to take place at any other stage of the promulgation of the gospel, because Jerusalem was the scene where all the miracles of our Lord had been recently wrought, which would thus at once rush into the recollection of the new converts, who were themselves witnesses of the wonderful effusion of the spirit with most manifest demonstration of divine power. In such an unprecedented situation, it is not surely to be wondered at, that men's minds should be worked up to an unprecedented degree of religious zeal and mutual benevolence. In other places the evidence of the gospel was exhibited more gradually, and the effects, though every where great, were also gradual.

To those who demand a resistless evidence, as the only one worthy of a divine revelation, I would observe, with the acute and judicious Paley (*Evidence of Christianity*, chap. vi. sect. 3, p. 626; Dublin edit. 1795,) that we see described in this passage of scripture what the natural effect of such a degree of evidence probably must be, and that if this state of mind were universal, or long continued, the business of this world could not go on. This was however a noble instance of that disinterestedness, self-denial, and benevolence, which the gospel was designed to produce in the minds of men, and which is carefully

to

to be cultivated by such as profess themselves the disciples of Jesus, in every age and nation, though all are not obliged to exert it in the same manner or degree.

Another event connected with this community of goods, on which it may be necessary to make some remarks, is the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. Their crime then seems to have consisted (*vid. supra*) not in withholding part of the price of the land, for the whole of this "was in their own power;" but in bringing part of the price, and falsely asserting that they had brought the entire; whence it would seem they also might claim a right to be supported out of the common fund, as if they had given up their all to encrease it.

This conduct was certainly highly criminal; it included the greatest vain-glory, the grossest hypocrisy and falsehood, combined with fraud, and this practised on the apostles, whom they daily beheld exercising a supernatural power; whom they pretended to believe gifted with the spirit of God, and commissioned by him to instruct mankind; and to whom they professed the most implicit obedience. Falshood under such circumstances, when all other Christians were animated with such an opposite temper, seems to have been as great an act of impiety as can well be imagined: and surely we cannot therefore wonder that the divine justice should inflict a signal punishment on such persons, to prevent the authority of the apostles, and the holy spirit which actuated them from falling into total contempt, and the Christian society from being over-run with fraudulent impostors, practising on the pious benevolence of the first converts.—And this effect was produced, " * for great FEAR fell on all the people; and " though believers were daily added to the Lord, yet, of the " rest, durst no man join himself to them." But in this whole transaction the apostles were merely the instruments of the divine will; they only denounced, from a supernatural impulse, the impending punishment which divine power inflicted. Such severity may, perhaps, have been peculiarly necessary at the beginning of the new dispensation, like those signal examples of severity recorded in the Old Testament; as in the instances of Nadab and Abihu, Levit. x.—and Korah, Dathan and Abiram, Numb. xvi.

Acts iv. 13, 14.

For further information on this subject, consult Benson's History of Christianity, vol. 1, book 1, chap. iii. sect. 4, in fine, and Leland's Answer to Morgan, ch. xiii.

P. 103—116, “The testimony of the miracles wrought by the missionaries of the new faith considered.”

Acts xi. 15. Peter relates to the Christians assembled to consider his conduct in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us, at the beginning,” and he repeats the same assertion before the council, Acts xv. 8.—and in verse 12. “The multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.” And this was done to influence the decision of the council, which it did effectually.

P. 118. “In a violent tumult at Jerusalem, &c.”

In defence of St. Paul's conduct on this occasion, consult Limborchi Collatio cum Judæo, p. 134—165, and Benson's History of Christianity, vol. 3, book 3, chap. viii. sect. 3, p. 241. edit. 2. and Doddridge's Expositor, in Loc. vol. 3, p. 365.—and Leland's Answer to Morgan, chap. xiv. The objection that St. Paul dissembled his profession of Christianity in order to escape danger, is advanced by Orobio, the Jew, in his Amica Collatio cum Limborcho, p. 134, in these words,—“In Judea, (says he) “where the danger of persecution was imminent, “where he was accused of apostatizing from the law of the “Jews, and had been taken by the Roman procurator; he, “before Festus and Agrippa, denied all things of which he “was accused, saying, that he had taught nothing contrary to “circumcision, or the laws of his country, but that the people “persecuted him because he preached the resurrection of the “dead, and related that he had seen some celestial vision, (to “which the Pharisees, in opposition to the Sadducees, assented) “and because he taught repentance; though it was not true, “that it was on account of these things he had excited the hatred of the people, but because he turned away the Jews from “circumcision, and other legal rites, as abundantly appears “from

“ from the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles. Thus did
 “ they to the utmost of their power avoid danger.” Limborch’s
 Answer, p. 165, seems very satisfactory, “ in exclaiming in
 the Jewish senate, that “ *for the hope and resurrection of the dead*
“ he was called in question ; and thus exciting a dissention between
 “ the Pharisees and Sadducees, how was Paul culpable ?
 “ Did he deny he was a Christian ? No—he only said he was
 “ brought into judgment, on account of the resurrection of the
 “ dead ; and was not this true ? was it not the principal
 “ doctrine of the Christian religion, that Christ had risen, and
 “ that all who believe and obey him should rise like him [rather
 “ that all mankind should rise to judgment.] Thus he who is
 “ tried for the Christian religion, is really tried for the resur-
 “ rection of the dead. Paul was too well known to the Jews,
 “ and it was too notorious that he was a Christian for him to
 “ deny it, if he even wished to do so, or for the Pharisees to
 “ believe his denial. Paul spoke in the Sanhedrim not directly
 “ of Christ, but of the resurrection of the dead, that he might
 “ shew that the Pharisees had no cause to persecute the Christian
 “ religion, since it so strongly supported the principal doctrine
 “ which they espoused against the Sadducees.”—So far Lim-
 borch.

We may add, Paul’s conduct was the more justifiable, as
 Ananias, who was a Sadducee, and probably the chief of the
 sect, was so incensed against him, he would not afford him any
 opportunity of exculpating himself, but interrupted him with a
 gross insult in the very first sentence of his defence ; there seemed
 therefore no other expedient to procure an impartial hearing,
 but that of interesting some of the Sanhedrim to interfere in
 support of the apostle, and curb the violence of Ananias and
 his party. The mode adopted by St. Paul, seemed most likely
 to effect this ; but so heated were the passions of his enemies,
 even this could not succeed ; the dissension excited by the least
 attempt to protect the accused apostle, was so violent, that the
 chief captain was obliged to interfere, and take him by force
 from amongst them, lest they should tear him to pieces.
 Had Paul not employed this expedient, the entire Sanhedrim
 would have probably unanimously condemned him to death,
 and, as probably, on the instant executed their sentence, by

what they termed a judgment of zeal. Thus St. Paul seemed to have no means of obtaining an opportunity to vindicate his innocence, or even of saving his life, but that which he adopted, in which he did not in the least violate truth, or deny Christianity.

What Orobio asserts of St. Paul's conduct before Festus and Agrippa, is an absolute falsehood. Before them he openly avows his faith in Christ, relates his miraculous conversion to that faith, and strenuously defends its truth.

The propriety and wisdom of his conduct, as to the observance of the Jewish law, are, I trust, sufficiently vindicated in this chapter.

P. 123.—“ And this to carry on a deceit, which, “ instead of being (as some have wickedly and falsely termed it a pious fraud) would have been the “ most impious and blasphemous imposture which “ human imagination can conceive ; exalting a crucified deceiver, a man rejected and abandoned of “ God, as the Son of God and judge of the “ world.”

It should have been added, that it would have been also an imposture of the most cruel and treacherous kind, involving their converts in the most severe distresses and persecutions, nay, exposing them to the most cruel tortures and deaths ; and still further, to aggravate the guilt of this deceit, the more humble and benevolent, the more virtuous and pious men were, the more likely it was that they should become the victims of this fatal delusion, the conductors of which on this supposition practised on the virtues of their unhappy dupes, whom they exposed to almost certain misery, by flattering them with the hopes of another life ; hopes which these deceivers could not but know were grounded on facts palpably false, but which they solemnly attested as true. Vid. this point excellently illustrated by Doddridge, in his second sermon on the Evidences of Christianity, head the 2d. In Pistorius's Notes on Hartley, vol. 3. from p. 613 to 619, and Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of St. Paul, p. 22.

P. 121.—“ The testimony of history renders probable what St. Paul insinuates, that Ananias was not in truth at that time high priest.”

Consult on this subject Michaeli's Lectures, translated by Marsh, vol. 1. p. 52.

P. 138.—“ Throughout the four evangelists not one vision to any of the writers is so much as mentioned.”

Perhaps I ought to have excepted the transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor, related by three of the evangelists. It may be observed on this, as well as every other supernatural appearance recorded in the history of the New Testament, which was not attended by some certain miracle, submitted to the deliberate examination of the reason, as well as the senses of the spectators; that they were not intended or used as *proofs* of a divine mission, but are represented as deriving their entire credibility from their connection with the plain and sensible miracles, to which alone our Lord and the apostles appealed, as proofs of their divine authority. Thus our Lord commands the apostles, who were witnesses of his transfiguration, “ to tell no man what vision they had seen, till the Son of Man should be risen from the dead:”—an event established by such undeniable evidence of sense, as would evince the credibility of the transfiguration, while it would also explain its real meaning, and prevent it from being mistaken as a preface of that splendid, but temporal kingdom, which it was expected the Messiah should assume. Thus while the claims of enthusiasts are supported solely by transitory visions and secret miracles, the founders of Christianity, even when they relate such occurrences as having really happened; yet expressly distinguish between them and the unquestionable facts which they adduce, as the only proofs of their divine mission. Can any contrast be more striking than this?—yet this distinction has not been sufficiently attended to by deistical writers, to prevent their charging the apostles with fanaticism. On this score St. Paul in particular has been violently accused of it, in consequence of the vision related by him in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii.

—10. In answer to this charge, I think it sufficient to refer to the observations of Lord Lyttleton on this passage. Vid. his *Conversion of St. Paul*, from p. 151 to 153.

It is alledged as a strong instance, to shew that Christian faith is founded on immediate inspiration and infused evidence alone, that when our Lord said to St. Matthew, *follow me*, “immediately he left all and followed him.”

“It would surely seem strange, (says the * advancer of this objection) humanly considered, to see him thus deserting a beneficial employment, for he knew not whom, at a word’s speaking;” as if it were in any degree probable that St. Matthew, who resided at Capernaum, which was the place of our Lord’s general residence, as well as that of many of his disciples, and the scene of many of his most distinguished miracles, should not know who our Lord was. He had healed there, before this call, the Centurion’s son, Matth. viii.—and very shortly before, the paralytic, who was let down through the roof, our Lord was surrounded by such multitudes. But, says this author, + “it is likely if what he had seen before had had that good effect upon him, as to dispose him to discipleship, he would have had the merit of engaging voluntarily in the service, without waiting for a particular address.” What a likelihood is this!—was it then in St. Matthew’s power to choose whether he should become the select follower, the intimate friend, the confidential minister, of our Lord? and would it have been decorous to obtrude himself, unasked, into such a situation? or, on the other hand, when a teacher, who had so fully proved his divine character, invited him to this sacred function, was it unreasonable to obey the gracious call?

P. 140.—“The *character and conduct* of Christ Jesus; without attempting to delineate all the features of this consummate character, &c.”

Such a minute vindication of our Lord’s character seems the less necessary, as a number of writers have pointed out its spotless perfection, by the greatest variety of arguments; and though

* Vid. *Christianity not founded on argument*, p. 65.

perhaps no one of them has confined himself strictly to the subject of enthusiasm, yet almost any one, suggests abundant proofs of our Saviour's total freedom from any such weakness—particularly Duchal, in the admirable discourses on our Saviour's character, with which he begins his presumptive arguments for the Truth of the Christian Religion, printed in London, 1753. Macknight in his Truth of the Gospel History, Lond. 1733; b. 1, chap. iii. and iv. Bishop Law in his Reflections on the Life and Character of Christ, annexed to his Theory of Religion. Dr. Randolph in his View of our Saviour's Ministry, and particularly Primate Newcome, in his Observations on our Lord's Conduct and Character; who has enumerated the different writers who preceded him on this subject, while his own work supplies such copious information as will, in all probability, satisfy the serious enquirer.

Should my young readers wish to collect from Dr. Newcome's work, at one view, the parts that most immediately relate to this circumstance in our Lord's character, they will be assisted by the following references; they will find the nature of his doctrines explained in part 1, chap. i, the six first sections; the reasonableness of his precepts vindicated, part 1, chap. ii.; his caution and reserve in asserting his Messiahship justified, part 1, chap. iii. sect. 3; and to confine ourselves to these virtues which are more immediately connected with this subject, they will find his justice illustrated in part 2, chap. i. sect. 4.

His temperance, part 2, chap. i. sect. 5.

His meekness, Ib. sect. 6.

His humility, Ib. sect. 7.

His respect for civil and religious authority } Ib. sect. 12.

And above all, his consummate prudence } Ib. sect. 13.

If they peruse these sections with care, and add the recapitulation of our Lord's character, in part 2, chap. i. the 14th section, with the confirmation of the whole, derived from the testimony borne to it by enemies, adduced in book 2, chap. ii. and from the artless and impartial manner of the evangelists, illustrated in chap. iii. of the same work, they cannot, I think, but receive the fullest conviction, that the divine Jesus was totally

tally free from every symptom of enthusiasm, and adorned with that perfect wisdom and sober dignity which became the teacher of righteousness and the Son of God.

P. 196.—“ *I say the truth in Christ Jesus ; I lie not ; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart ; for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.*”

The commentators on this passage (Rom. ix. 3.) labour to qualify and to soften this exclamation ; I confess I see not the necessity of doing so—such a wish could never be conceived as made deliberately and seriously, because it implies an impossibility which it would be repugnant to the attributes of God to suffer, and therefore it would be impious seriously to wish. It seems to me nothing more than a natural though bold hyperbole, bursting forth from the apostle, whose quick sensibility distressed at the idea of the rejection of his countrymen, which he was under the necessity of announcing, labours to find the strongest terms for expressing his ardent affection for them, and his grief at this rejection. An hyperbole almost as strong occurs, when the apostle (Gal. i. 8.) anxious to impress upon the Galatians the danger of apostatizing from the truth of the gospel, and the guilt of those who should attempt to seduce them, exclaims, “ though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” Surely this does not imply that the apostle seriously thought it possible that he himself or an angel from heaven should preach contrary to the gospel he delivered them. Perhaps this hyperbole was suggested to the apostle by the passage, Exod. xxxii. 32. when Moses wishes to be blotted out of the book of God, rather than that the Israelites should not be forgiven their sin. Whoever wishes to see other interpretations may consult Locke and Macknight in Loc. and Witius’s Dissertation upon it in the second volume of his *Miscellanea Sacra* ; and especially a sermon on this text, preached before the university of Oxford, by Dr. James Bandinell, annexed to his sermons preached at Bampton’s lecture in the year 1780, Oxford, 1780.

Observations on the chief objections made to the morality of the gospel, as being extravagant and fanatical.

In the preface it has been shewn in what strong terms the morality of the gospel has been accused of fanaticism; and in the 6th chapter, those characters have been pointed out which seem most decidedly contrary to such a spirit—characters which, it is hoped, will vindicate it from this accusation. It would be extremely tedious to quote all the texts which have been overstrained or misrepresented by the mistaken friends, or the prejudiced enemies of Christianity, so as to afford pretexts for this imputation, and it is scarcely possible to interpret doubtful or obscure passages of scripture without an immediate comparison with the original context; commentators must therefore be referred to for the explanation of particular texts. It may be sufficient here to enumerate the general grounds on which this accusation has been supported, hinting at the answers which may be made and referring to authors, where such questions will be found satisfactorily discussed.

The first pretext is derived from the strong terms in which the writers of the New Testament speak of the little value which is to be set on the things of this world, or the severity with which they condemn them, and enjoin men to look to the favour of God, and the rewards of another life, as the great, nay, almost the sole object worth their attention. “* Love not the world, neither the things of the world.” “† Take no thought (it should be no *anxious* thought) for to-morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed; ‡ whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God: § the friendship of the world is enmity with God.” These, and such passages as these, are adduced to shew that Christianity inculcates a scheme of morality wholly impracticable and enthusiastic, inconsistent with the feelings of human nature, and the business of human life. On this charge it may be observed, that it is most certain Christianity does not give any reasonable ground to suppose that

* 1 John ii. 15. † Matt. vi. 31. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 31. § James iv. 4.

it encourages men to * forsake the necessary business, or the useful relations of human life; that it supposes the stations of husband, and wife, and children; of masters and servants, of rulers and subjects, of rich and poor, of teachers and learners; and that it gives such rules for human conduct in all these different situations, as require strict integrity, active benevolence, unassuming humility, patience and resignation; in short, every quality which tends to promote the happiness of the individual, and the welfare of society; rules, which if practised, would make the whole world a scene of virtue, piety, and peace.

It is equally certain that † industry, attention to the interests of those with whom we are connected, or for whom we are concerned, far from being prohibited or discountenanced, are recommended, and even enjoined. It may in the next place easily be shewn, that those passages which seem most strongly to condemn the world, the things of the world, and the cares of the world, mean only to condemn the ‡ fordid pursuits, and vicious pleasures, and excessive love of the world; to condemn sensuality, ambition, covetousness, extreme solicitude, repining at the dispensations, and distrusting the providence of God. But while we vindicate the gospel from such misinterpretations as would pervert its exalted, but rational precepts, into fanatical rants, we must never forget that its precepts, and its motives are really § exalted, far exalted above the general ideas, and general practice of mankind. That it proposes the fear and the love of God as the leading principles of action, to which every other motive must be subordinate, and by which every action ought to be controuled. That these sacred principles are not to confine their operations to occasional prayers, to a temporary and transitory influence in the church or the closet, but

* Vid. Supra, p. 94, 95, and compare Rom. xii. xiii. and xv. chapters, Gal. v. and vi. Col. iii. and iv. 1 Tim. iii. and iv. v. and vi. Titus ii. and iii. How admirably the principles and precepts of Christianity may be applied to illustrate and enforce the different duties of every rank of life, consult Gilborne's Excellent Enquiry into these Duties passim; his Conclusion on the Truth of Christianity, is peculiarly worthy attention.

† Vid. supra, p. 95, 96—101.

‡ Vid. MacLaine's Letters to Soame Jenyns, Letter 4th.

§ Vid. Mr. Wilberforce's excellent View of Professed Christianity, contrasted with real Christianity, particularly chap. iv. v. and vii.

to regulate our conduct in active life as constantly as in religious retirement. This will seem to a worldly or depraved mind enthusiastic; but the true philosopher and the enlightened statesman know that the perpetual effort at improvement, the humble and self-distrusting watchfulness which these precepts of the gospel require, most directly tend to promote the perfection of the individual and the * happiness of society. Far therefore from inducing a suspicion that they originate in fanaticism, they strongly confirm the divine original of the Christian scheme.

A second pretext on which the charge of fanaticism has been advanced against the morality of the gospel, is derived from the manner in which it teaches men to feel and act towards enemies, and the strong terms in which it inculcates, patience under injury; and totally forbids retaliation and revenge. † "Love your enemies, bless them which curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you. Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

These, and such passages as these, are condemned as fanatical and extravagant, inculcating an abject and slavish temper, directing what it is impossible to practise, and what, if possible, would be pernicious to society, and destructive to the individual. That such objections should be strongly urged and readily allowed is not much to be wondered at, in an age when duelling is still permitted to disgrace civilized society, ennobling the infliction of personal revenge, and punishing injury, or vindicating character on the principles first taught by the savage barbarism of that Gothic ignorance, which unable to distinguish guilt from innocence by reason and evidence, substituted trial by battle as an appeal to God; but the philanthropist and the philoso-

* Vid. an honourable Testimony of the Importance of Christianity to social Happiness, in Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, book 24th, chap. iii. and vi. and a Letter of his to Warburton, preserved in the divine legation, book 3, sect. 1. near the conclusion.

† Matt. v. 44. Ibid. 39. Vid. in explanation of these and similar passages, Newcome's Observations on our Lord's Character, &c. part 1, chap. i. particularly sect. 1 and 9. Vid. also Leland's Answer to Morgan, chap. xiii. and xvi. his View of the Deistical Writers, letter 21, in his observations on Mr. Hume's Ideas of Christian Morality. Also Letter 22, in Answer to Lord Bolingbroke.

pher will not form his decision on such principles, but will candidly criticise the texts of Scripture thus condemned, and consider the true nature of that * general spirit and temper they recommend. He will observe, that to take these texts, in their rigorous literal sense, is in many instances totally unreasonable. They were meant, in many cases, (as in the texts here quoted) to counteract the misinterpretations of the Jewish doctors, who, because the Mosaic † code enjoined the law of equal retaliation to be observed in the punishment of crimes by the regular sentence of a public judge, transferred this rule to the indulgence of private revenge; and were notorious also for want of charity in their feelings and conduct to all persons not of their own nation and their own sect, and even to whole bodies of men, whose professions, though necessary and innocent, they branded as disgraceful and infamous. Hence the contrary principles of forbearance under injuries, and love to all, were inculcated by our Lord with peculiar emphasis, and illustrated by the most striking and familiar instances, which however, so far as immediate patience and sufferance of injury without resistance is enforced, are all taken from injuries of a more tolerable kind, from such encroachments, as it is really wiser to bear, than litigiously to contend against. But it appears from various passages, that it is not the particular literal rule which it is meant strictly to enforce as an example in every instance to be imitated; but that it is meant to recommend in the strongest manner the general temper of humility, mildness, patience, submission, ready forgiveness, and active benevolence, even under the greatest provocations; and to condemn as strongly what the world so generally admires, or at least tolerates, high spirit, quick resentment, prompt retaliation, unyielding enmity.

And considering these precepts in this view, we immediately see the necessity of expressing them in the strongest manner, with no other limitations or exceptions, than what reason and necessity would plainly point out in each particular instance; for had the general rule been attended with any limitation of a general nature, how would human depravity and violence force every

* Consult Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, part 2, ch. ii. and Newcome's *Observat. ut supra*.

† Vid. Exod. xxiii. 22 to 26.

particular instance within this limitation, and plead the divine permission to sanction the greatest excesses of malignity. Who is there who reviews the persecutions which have disgraced the profession of Christianity, and the constant power of the angry and malignant passions in human life, and will not perceive the fatal use which would have been made of any relaxation or exception in those precepts of the gospel which relate to this subject? Yet notwithstanding this, we find in the instructions of our Lord and his apostles, and even in their conduct, sufficient proofs that they did not recommend or practise that total insensibility under injury, and that indifference as to their safety and their character, which might give some plausible reason to charge them with fanaticism. They distinguished clearly and strongly between * justice and injustice, malignity and benevolence in the conduct of those with whom they were concerned, and in the treatment they themselves received. They resorted to such legal and innocent means of guarding both their safety and their good name as were compatible with their particular situation and the peculiar object of their mission; and they enjoin men to † discriminate, and to avoid, nay even, when their station authorizes it, to censure and punish the obstinately vicious and perverse. When therefore, men's conduct towards ourselves, displays clearly that perverseness and malignity which we should be bound to censure and punish when it is practised towards others; it cannot be meant that we should be so blind as to view them with the same affection and regard, as if they had displayed no such qualities. We are certainly justified in guarding against them, in avoiding them, and if it is necessary to the welfare of individuals, and the peace and order of society, we are bound to warn others against them, and to adopt such means of exposing their crimes, and punishing them, as the laws of the society to which we belong require. But we are also bound by the precepts of Christianity, not to suffer our conduct to be guided by any mixture of personal resentment. We are never to permit ourselves to lose the inclination, or neglect any opportunity of doing every thing in our power to benefit even our greatest enemies. ‡ “ If

* Vid. our Lord's reply to the officer who smote him, John xiii. 23. and supra, chap. iii. sect. 4, p. 115 to to 124.

† Vid. Matt. xviii. 15 to 18. I Cor. v. 13. Rom. xvi. 17. Phil. iii. 18.

‡ Rom. xii. 20.

" thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirst, give him drink, " for in so doing thou mayest heap coals of fire on his head." You may soften and melt down the heart hardened in vice and malignity, by the kindly glow of benevolence and gratitude, and * thus " not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." We should be ever anxious for the reformation of our greatest enemies; and the more anxious, the more we are assured of their malice and their guilt, because they are so much the more wretched and pitiable. Such is the system of Christian morality on the forgiveness of injuries; and undoubtedly, it is so far exalted above the principles and practice, even of the professed Christian world, that it will be readily pronounced enthusiastic and extravagant by all mere men of the world. But it is so consonant to the feelings of virtue, and the interests of mankind, and so little conformable to what might have been naturally expected from the prejudices and bigotry of the Jews, at the period when the gospel was promulgated, as plainly to indicate, that it was derived from a far different source, the wisdom and mercy of God.

Another pretext on which the morality of the gospel has been charged with fanaticism, is, that it is said, " it considers marriage as a state of imperfection;" but this is so contrary to the whole tenor of the principles and conduct of the apostles, that it scarcely deserves a reply. Our Lord, probably from a prophetic foresight of the extreme abuses, which this error would give rise to in his church, chose to commence the manifestation of his divine power, by honoring a marriage † with his presence, and assisting the innocent festivity of the entertainment, by miraculously supplying the master of the feast with wine, probably to make up the deficiency occasioned by the number of disciples, who may have attended on himself; and he has ennobled and strengthened the marriage-tye, by expressly declaring, that God, when he made man at the beginning, ‡ " made them male and " female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and " mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be " one flesh; wherefore, they are no more twain, but one flesh; " what therefore God hath joined together, let no man put " asunder." Yet, notwithstanding this express declaration of

* Ibidem.

† John ii.

‡ Matt. xix.

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the divine original of marriage, immediately before their eyes, deistical writers have presumed to alledge an obscure and figurative phrase, which occurs a few verses after as a decisive proof, that our Lord disparaged that sacred institution; yet, on a faithful comparison with the original, the contrary appears. I adopt the translation of the learned and ingenious Mr. Wakefield. The whole passage, after the words already quoted, runs thus:—"They say unto him, why then did Moses command us to give a writing of separation, and to divorce her? he saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but in the beginning it was not so: but I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for adultery, and marry another, he committeth adultery. His disciples say unto him, if the case of the husband be so with the wife, it is better not to marry. But he said unto them, *none are capable of that save they to whom it is given*; for there are eunuchs who were so from their birth, and there are eunuchs who were made so by men, and there are eunuchs who made themselves such for the kingdom of heaven; so he who is able to endure it, let him endure it."

Mr. Wakefield's remark on the words marked in Italics, "that abstinence from marriage is the thing here spoken of by our Saviour." The meaning then of the entire passage is, that such abstinence far from generally tending, as the disciples seemed to conceive, to the happiness of the individual, or being fit to be enjoined on any numerous descriptions of men, was adapted to some few individuals only; and that as there were only a few who were obliged to abstain from marriage from necessity, whether natural or accidental, so there were but a few who could do so on a religious motive, though some few there might be. Surely the passage thus explained breaths nothing of that fanatical exaltation of celibacy, which in subsequent ages corrupted the simplicity of Christianity. With as little reason has St. Paul been accused of partially exalting celibacy; because in a period of great persecution, he stated it as his advice, that in the *present distress* it was better for those who were single to continue so, marriage multiplying the ob-

jects of anxiety, which, at such a period, would distract their minds; but he takes the greatest care to have it understood, that this was merely spoke *of himself*, not * as of divine command, and maintains, in the strongest terms, the innocence and the general utility of marriage; which in another place he declares, “† is honourable in all,” which he states was sanctioned by the ‡ practice of the apostles themselves, and as to which, he asserts his own right to imitate their example if he pleased, though from motives of expediency he declined doing so. But such cavils as these do not deserve to be noticed farther than to shew my young readers, little versed in the arts of controversy, how slight are the grounds on which such cavils are advanced, and how detached and obscure texts are forced into the service of infidelity, while direct, plain, and repeated declarations, as well as the general spirit of scripture, and even the immediate example of our Lord and his apostles, are totally over-looked.

I know not of any other points in which Christian morality has been accused of fanaticism; it has indeed been § censured as not enjoining friendship and patriotism. But does not that religion which teaches men to be || humble, benevolent, sympathetic, “weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice,” “in honour preferring one another”—which recommends placability, forgiveness of injuries, anxiety for the soul’s welfare—which condemns ambition, envying, strife, avarice;—does not this religion lay the foundation, and inculcate the principles on which only true friendship can be erected? Thus also, when Christianity teaches men to love their neighbours as themselves, to “¶ obey those who rule over them in singleness of heart, not for wrath, but for conscience sake;” “to give tribute to whom tribute is due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour; to love the brotherhood, fear God, and honour the king;” when it teaches men to perform

* Vid. Cor. vii. 25 and 26. † Heb. xiii. 4.

‡ Vid. 1 Cor. ix. 5. Supra, p. 95.

§ Vid. Shaftsbury’s Characteristics, p. 93 to 102; and in Answer Brown’s Essays on the Characteristics. Essay 3. sect. 10, and MacLaine’s Fifth Letter to Soame Jenyns.

|| Rom. xii. 15.

¶ Ibid. xii. 10.

every

every duty, and attend to every relation of civil life—to promote peace and order, and brotherly love. Are not these the true means of promoting the happiness of our country? Is not the man who acts on these principles the true patriot? If from theory we turn to example, did not Jesus, when he laboured to recall his countrymen to religion and virtue, act the patriot? When he lamented, in terms the most tenderly affectionate, the infatuated obstinacy and guilt of his countrymen; when he wept at the * approaching desolation which their guilt provoked, and which he so long laboured to avert, did he not in these instances feel as a patriot? When he shed tears at the grave of Lazarus, did he not feel as a friend? When, at his last supper before his sufferings, he addressed his apostles—“ † This “ is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved “ you; greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay “ down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if you do “ whatsoever I command you: henceforth I call you not ser- “ vants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I “ have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of “ my father, I have made known unto you”—Was not this the language of friendship? When the beloved disciple leaned on his ‡ bosom; when in the agony of death he § committed his mother to the care of that disciple, did he not in these instances feel and act as a friend?—Thus too, in the great apostle of the Gentiles, did not his zeal for the reformation and happiness of his countrymen glow with such ardor, that his expressions of it have been accused of rising to a fanatic violence; and in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, as well as his intercession with || Philemon in behalf of Onesimus do we not discern that spirit of friendship which ennobles and refines the mind; the most anxious wishes, and most watchful attention to their temporal and eternal interest, the strictest confidence in their piety and virtue, and the tenderest sympathy in their cares and distresses. Such are the examples which Christianity holds out; why then is it accused of not encouraging patriotism and friendship? because it does not make either the subject of a direct encomium, or the object of a direct precept. Let us consider whether this

* Luke xix. 41. † John xv. 12. ‡ Ib. xiii. 23. § Ib. xix. 26, 27.

|| Vid. supra, p. 196. || Vid. supra, p. 190.

can be accounted for.—Had the Jews been exhorted to patriotism, would they not have understood it as a call to rescue their country from the Roman yoke? Had the Romans—would not some have thought it their duty to be active in aggrandizing the power of the empire, and others, in resisting the despotism of the emperor? and were objects such as these fit to be even indirectly recommended by the preachers of piety and peace?—Even to this hour is not patriotism too generally understood to consist in that narrow and mistaken spirit of monopolizing ambition, which, says a * spirited writer, “ imitates the mean partiality of a parish officer, and labours to enrich and aggrandize the patriot’s particular district at the expence of every other;” and would it have been safe to make a virtue, so grossly mistaken and so much abused, the object of direct panegyric, or recommend it any other way than by enjoining every virtue, and inculcating every principle which supports true patriotism, in such a manner as could not be perverted to countenance the false—and by exhibiting in the author of our religion, the most exalted example of this, as of every other virtue?

Finally, if we consider the nature of friendship, it would have been evidently impossible to make this the object of a direct precept. Friendship depends not merely on ourselves; it requires that other persons should possess taste and feelings congenial with ours; it requires an opportunity of cultivating, and the happiness of conciliating a return of confidence and affection; and how would this have sounded as the object of a direct precept? † “ Take care on pain of divine displeasure, to find out some one or more persons of dispositions and pursuits similar to your own; take care that not only you should give them, but that they shall give you opportunities of cultivating a mutual regard: finally, love them, and remember you are under an indispensable obligation, that they shall love you.” Such is the language, for the want of which superficial declaimers arraign the morality of the gospel; when will they learn “ to understand first, and not till then rebuke!”

* Soame Jenyns.

† I have met with this answer to Shaftsbury, I think in Dr. Beattie’s *Evidences of Christianity*, 12mo. I have not now the book by me.

That

That Shaftsbury is fairly chargeable with this absurdity, appears from his own definition of friendship, in his characteristics, v. 1. p. 99. He remarks that the "heroic virtues of private friendship, and zeal for the public and our country, are virtues purely voluntary in a Christian; they are no essential parts of his charity—his conversation is in heaven; nor has he any occasion for such supernumerary cares or embarrassments here on earth, as may obstruct his way thither, or retard him in the careful task of working out his salvation. —Under the Jewish dispensation (he says) each of these virtues had illustrious examples, and were in some manner recommended;" but of Christianity he makes no such acknowledgment.—Friendship he thus defines—"By private friendship, no reader can here suppose is meant that common benevolence and charity, which every Christian is obliged to shew towards all men, and in particular towards his fellow Christians, his neighbour, brother and kindred of whatever degree, but that peculiar relation, which is formed by a cement and harmony of minds, by mutual esteem and reciprocal tenderness and affection, and which we emphatically call a FRIENDSHIP. Such was that between the Jewish heroes, David and Jonathan, whose love surpassed that of women; such were those friendships described so frequently by poets, between Pylades and Orestes, Theseus and Pirithous, &c. &c. &c.

Such therefore is the friendship which the noble Lord blames Christianity for not requiring as a duty, or distinguishing by a peculiar reward.—Alas! was it not too much to expect that every man to be a good Christian must be a Pylades or an Orestes, a Theseus or Pirithous?

References and Examples to confirm the Assertions advanced in the preceding Essay, as to the Characters of genuine Fanaticism.

On this subject I have thought it sufficient to select but a few examples, and make very brief extracts from the writers to whom I refer. I could not bring myself to read many details of such extravagance and absurdity; and I cannot suppose my readers would desire I should copy them. It was, however, indispensably necessary to give some examples, to render the

contrast between the sober conduct and rational doctrines of the Apostles, and the extravagancies and follies of fanaticism decisive and conspicuous.

As to the nature of the evidence by which enthusiasts declare they were themselves convinced of their divine MISSION, OR TO WHICH THEY APPEAL TO CONVINCE OTHERS.

“ Blind credulity, and dictatorial positiveness, form the two leading and essential marks of an enthusiastic mind.” Vid supra, p. 3.

P. 6.—“ Enthusiastic faith is founded on an internal persuasion alone, &c.”

P. 22.—“ The impulse of fanaticism will produce its effects irregularly and imperfectly, &c.”

P. 29.—“ Fanatical delusions seldom last longer than while they meet with minds all equally and fitly disposed to catch the impulse, &c.”

P. 42.—“ The apostles did not appeal to agitations of mind, or convulsions of body—visions by night, or secret whispers by day, &c.”

P. 65.—“ Enthusiasts are prone to mistake the chimeras of a disordered fancy for the visions of a prophetic illumination, &c.”

P. 67.—“ A claim to a prophetic character will not succeed in spreading enthusiasm, &c.”

P. 67.—“ The prediction will be vague of an event easily produced, and therefore easily foreseen; trifling, obscure, &c.”

P. 137.—“ Enthusiastic writings abound, like the
“ history of Mahomet, with the accounts of nocturnal
“ visions, &c.”

Vid. Koran, chap. 17. Abulfeda's History, chap. 19. Ma-
racci, prodromi ad refutationem Alcorani, tom. 2. Part 2, p. 13.

“ Sometimes like the priestesses of old, overpower-
“ ed by the influence of their god, or like the devo-
“ tees prostrate at the tombs of modern saints, their
“ inspiration is displayed by convulsions and agitati-
“ ons, &c. Sometimes like Lord Herbert, when
“ wound up to the height of devotion, they mistake
“ the voice of a still small wind, as a voice from God.”

Vid. Leland's deistical writers, vol. i. p. 24. 4th edition, 1764.

For an account of pagan enthusiasms, consult Plato's Ti-
mæus, Operum tom. 3. p. 71.—Editio Stephani; cum Interpre-
tatione Serrani, 1578.

Jamblichus de Mysteriis Ægypti, passim, particularly cap. 8.
in fine.

Plutarchus de Defectu Oraculorum, Operum tom. ii. p. 432
and 436. Editio Xylini Francofurti, 1620.

Cicero de Divinatione, particularly lib. 1. sec. 37. Edit. Oliveti.

Conformable to the representations of these authors, are the
poetic fictions of Virgil, Æn. lib. 6. line 45 to 50, and 76 to 80,
and Lucan's Pharsalia, lib. 5. line 110 to 120, and 148 to 195.

Plato and Jamblichus are so much to my purpose, I am
tempted to translate a short passage from each. Plato having
described the different parts and uses of the human frame, as-
serts, that the structure of the liver rendered it a fit instrument
for carrying to the imagination nocturnal visions and impres-
sions, sometimes gloomy and terrific, sometimes gentle and
delightful; and adds, that here also was fixed the seat of pro-
phetic vision (*μαντιν*); for, says he, “ They who formed
“ the human frame, remembering the command of the su-
“ preme Father, that they should make man as excellent as
“ possible, formed even this less noble part, that it should have
“ some apprehension of truth, and therefore they placed in it
“ the seat of prophetic vision; and it is a sufficient proof that

“ God

“ God connected this power of prophecy with the irrational part of man, that nobody ever attains to true and inspired prophecy while in his sober reason; but when the power of his understanding is impeded by sleep, or subdued either by disease, or some direct divine inspiration; for, it is the sober man alone who can understand what is spoken or signified, whether in dreams, or directly by this prophetic and inspired nature; and to explain the visions thus beheld, and to distinguish what any thing points out and to whom, whether it be good or evil, future, past, or present; for it is not the part of the person agitated by the fury of inspiration, whether he still continues under its dominion or not, to judge of what is seen or spoken by himself, &c.”

Jamblichus is still more express in describing the agitation, and even frenzy that attended the supposed inspirations of paganism. He is endeavouring to prove the reality of these inspirations; and he argues, that divination and prophecy do not arise from the passions of the mind, nor the different temperament of the body, nor from both together.—“ Let us then,” says he, investigate the causes of this divine fury, which are nothing else than illuminations descending from the gods themselves, and the spirits by them infused; and a complete and absolute possession, by which they overpower the whole man, which absorbs all our faculties, and puts a stop to every natural operation, and motion, producing words which are not understood by the speaker, but which they pronounce with a tongue moved by a divine fury, while they are entirely subservient, and instrumental to the energy of the god who possesses them. Of this kind is every true inspiration (*Εκστασις*); and from these causes does it arise, &c.” This is therefore the regular and allowed description of pagan inspirations; and conformable to this are the representations of the poets, as well as the philosophers.

If the reader wishes for a curious and entertaining view of fanaticism, let him consult Stillingfleet, on the Idolatry of the Church of Rome, chap. 4. entitled, Of the Fanaticism of the Romish Church. Stillingfleet's Works, Vol. V. page 90 to 136, edition of 1709. He will read of St. Bridget, “in whose holy extasies were five rays coming from the five wounds of our Saviour

"Saviour to five parts of her body; and she prayed that the wounds might not appear, and immediately the colour of the blood was changed into pure light, and her confessor saw these splendid wounds on her body." But by what instrument, (adds Stillingfleet), did he see the wound in her heart. Vid. p. 94. Also, of the virgin Juliana, "who had many extasies and raptures; and in her prayers, almost always saw the moon in her brightness, but with a snip taken off from her roundness, at which she was much troubled. At last it was revealed to her, that the moon signified the church, and that fraction, the want of one solemnity more to be observed in it; upon which she received a command from heaven to proclaim the observation of this solemnity." And a friend of her's Isabella, in an extasy, "saw all the heavenly orders upon their knees, supplicating God, that, to confirm the faith of Christians, this feast should be observed, &c. &c." Ib. p. 97, 98. quoted from Bzovius, a Roman Catholic author.

St. Benedict, saw the soul of Germanus, bishop of Capua, in a fiery circle, carried by angels to heaven.—Above all, he saw all the world under one ray of the sun. Stillingfleet, ut supra, p. 101.

"St. Francis was converted by dreams and visions, in which he was sometimes swallowed up in God, as Bonaventure, the author of his life, expresses it. One day, when he was alone in a solitary place, he fell into an extasy of joy, and had full assurance of the remission of his sins; and being transported beyond himself, he was caught up in a wonderful light, wherein his mind being enlarged, he foresaw all that should come to pass concerning his order."

But still more distinguished for fanaticism, was Ignatius Loyola, founder of the order of the Jesuits. Vid. Stillingfleet, ut supra, from p. 118 to p. 124. who quotes only the lives written of him by his own order. "His zeal having been inflamed by studying the lives of the saints, he in a fit of zeal one night got out of his bed, and fell down on his knees before the image of the blessed Virgin, and in that posture vowed himself her devotee.—He soon after put on a long coat of sackcloth, with a cord about it, at which he hung a bottle of water, with a wicker shoe on one foot, and the other naked, and
" his

" his head exposed to the violence of the weather, he proceed-
 " ed on his journey. At Marnefa, he took up his lodging in
 " the town hospital, and let his hair and nails grow, and begged
 " from door to door, and fasted six days in the week, and
 " whipped himself thrice a day, and was seven hours every day
 " in vocal prayer upon the bare ground; and he shortly after
 " had such clear divine revelations, say his biographers, that in
 " a moment of time he understood the greatest mysteries of re-
 " ligion, and the most subtle speculations in philosophy, espe-
 " cially the way of God's making the world was made clear to
 " him, but not so as he could express it to others. In one of
 " his extasies, he continued eight days, in which, says his
 " biographer, he saw the frame and model of the society of the
 " Jesuits. He went a pilgrim to Jerusalem; in returning
 " through Spain, he was brought before a Spanish com-
 " mander; now says his historian, it had been his custom not
 " to give men any titles of respect, but to call them only by
 " their common names; and being brought before the com-
 " mander, would not so much as take off his hat to him, &c. &c."

If the reader wishes to know more of this celebrated fanat-
 ic, let him consult, besides Stillingfleet, Douglas's Criterion,
 from p. 69 to 75. Bayle's Dictionary, article Loyola, and
 Mr. Wharton's Enthusiasm of the Church of Rome demon-
 strated, in observations on the life of Ignatius.

About the end of the 16th century, there arose in Savoy a
 sect of enthusiasts who pretended to be prophets, and who af-
 terwards made many disciples in London, where they were pa-
 tronized by Sir Richard Bulkeley, a man of some note and
 learning, on whom they had wrought a cure, which he con-
 ceived to be supernatural. A very particular and curious ac-
 count of them was published in 1709 at London, and annexed
 to the 4th edition of Dr. Hicke's Spirit of Enthusiasm exor-
 cised—it is entitled, "The New Pretenders to Prophecy ex-
 " mined, and their Pretences shewn to be groundless and
 " false," by N. Spinckes, M. A. This author gives a parti-
 cular account of their conduct, and quotes their own predic-
 tions. These pretended saints, affected to speak languages,
 when inspired, of which, out of their extasy, they declared
 themselves incapable. But they were Hebrew, Greek, and
 Latin

Latin, tongues unknown, and therefore useless to those whom they addressed; nay, they declare, that they themselves, when out of their extasies and agitations, understood not what they said in them. They spoke even those languages barbarously, imperfectly, and almost unintelligibly, and improved as learners might be supposed to do; but what is most decisive, they could not speak the living tongue of the nation wherein they came to teach; the French prophets could not speak English, nor the English, French. They also pretended, that miracles were wrought by them; but, of fifteen persons whom they attempted to heal, they themselves represent, that to the tumor of one a bladder was applied, and that it was dressed three or four times a day; that a second was only beginning to recover; that five had received no benefit; a sixth but little; a seventh no benefit at the time, though she afterwards recovered. They also pretended to prophecy, but their prophecies were sometimes of events of the most trifling nature, easily produced, and therefore easily foreseen: as, when one is said to tell them by inspiration, "that there was a number of good people " at hand, who, in looking for the assembly, had lost their way " in the woods or fields:" or, when rational conjecture might avail, as of the deaths of persons in sickness, or peculiar situations of danger, without however specifying the particulars that should attend them. Sometimes their miracles are plain frauds, as in the case of E. Gray, recited as above by Mr. Spinckes, p. 397. and in that of Mr. Lacy, 405. Some were antic tricks and strange agitations, "falling flat upon the floor " at once like a board, &c. &c."

But the consummation of their folly, as it was the period of their influence, was their celebrated prophecy of the resurrection of Dr. Emes, which it was positively predicted, should take place on the 25th of May, 1708, five months after his interment, publicly, by a miraculous power to be exercised by Mr. Lacy. This prophecy was pronounced repeatedly while the prophets underwent great agitations; but when the time came, and the city bands were placed around to prevent any disturbance, no Mr. Lacy appeared, no resurrection took place. Mr. Lacy published some foolish reasons to account for the divine promise not being fulfilled, but, alas! they could not restore
the

the credit of his sect. I find they had also prophesied, that one
 " Stephen Halford, a cutler, at Birmingham, should die on
 " February 3, 1707; that he should lie in the same room for
 " three days, dead; that he should then be buried, and twenty
 " days after rise again."—The man who had been one of
 themselves, and firmly believed the prediction, was thrown into
 great agitations—but the time passed, he did not die, and was
 so convinced of the delusion as to forsake the sect. They also
 prophesied, that within six months, from the 29th of October,
 1707, London should be destroyed.—I mention these circum-
 stances, to shew how apt enthusiasts will be to prophecy, and
 how certainly such prophecy will destroy their credit. We have
 another instance of the rashness of fanatics, as to prophecy, in
 the reveries of Brothers, who, in his revealed knowledge of
 the prophecies and times, p. 51. Dublin edition, 1795, in a
 paragraph, dated 1794, 1st of the month, called July, writes
 thus: "The Lord God said to me among other things, in a vision
 " early in the morning, for I had been earnestly praying to
 " him the evening before, to hasten my revelation to the Jews,
 " and inform me how long it would be until it took place, be-
 " cause I was daily abused as an impostor for publishing his
 " commands, by wicked men, every one of them led on under
 " the influence of an evil spirit—You must be at *Constantinople*,
 " in your way to *Jerusalem*, by this time the next year. I have raised
 " up one from the north, (meaning the revealed prince of the
 " Hebrews at this time), and he shall come, (meaning to Je-
 " rusalem, from that northern part of the world alluded to),
 " (England lies in the north, and it is indeed the country
 " meant) from the rising of the sun he shall call upon my
 " name, and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and
 " as the potter treads clay, p. 61. Who hath declared from
 " the beginning, that we may know, and before the time,
 " (meaning the prophecy is fulfilled, it being 2461 years from
 " its declaration then to its *accomplishment*, now this present year of
 " 1795) that we may say he is righteous, yea, there is none
 " that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there
 " is none that heareth your words, *ibid.* The Lord God
 " commands me to say to you, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, that
 " as you are reviled, and considered by your former acquaint-
 " ances

"ances as ruined and lost for speaking the truth, as he manifested it to you, for publishing your testimony of me as his servant, *you shall, by the expiration of three months, from this day, have your choice, of being either governor-general of India, or president of the Board of Controul in England*, that all men may be convinced, that he that rules in heaven, is able to exalt, or to abase; that he is still able, even at this late hour of a wicked world, to reward the obedient to his blessed spirit, and give the most eminent places on earth to whomsoever he pleases," p. 65.

For a proof of the irregularity and uncertainty with which fanaticism produces its effects, consult Douglas's Criterion, where he examines the pretended miracles performed at the tomb of the Abbe Paris, from p. 175 to 190. He remarks, that the cures when real, were wrought on persons whose imaginations were strongly impressed; that the applications were repeated, so that days and weeks, and even months intervened, between the first application and the relief. That they were of such disorders, as the imagination, and the force of nervous affections have particular influence upon; that the cures were attended with violent convulsions and agitations; that but a few of thousands had been healed. I take no notice of the multitude of forgeries and frauds about these miracles, as I only consider them so far as they were influenced by fanaticism. Vid. also Dr. Elrington on Miracles, from p. 232 to 245, and from p. 299 to the end. Vid. also Bishop Douglas's Remarks on the Cure of the Evil, by the Royal Touch; where he states the strong probability, that even when such cures were real, they were wrought by the force of imagination, p. 203. His account of the cures performed by Mr. Greatrakes, by stroking with the hand, is well worth our notice. This person, a gentleman of some fashion in the county of Waterford in Ireland, began 1662, to have a strange persuasion in his mind, of which he was not able to give a rational account to others, that the gift of curing the king's evil was bestowed upon him, and he afterwards attempted agues, and all sorts of diseases. But it must be observed, that many whom he was most anxious to heal, and who applied to him, he was unable to heal at all, as Lady Conway, whom he could not cure of a head-ach, though he stayed

stayed at her house about three weeks or a month for that purpose—the cures were also effected gradually, and the operation of the hand frequently repeated. In many cases there was occasion to make use of razors and other sharp instruments to lay open the sores. The number of those who received no benefit from him after repeated trials, greatly exceeded the number of those who were relieved; and many who received benefit, received no cure, but afterwards relapsed. Vid. Douglas, from p. 205 to 212. On the cure of Madame de la Fosse. Vid. Douglas, p. 230 to 233. it was gradual and imperfect. For a vindication of the miracles of our Lord from such imputation, Vid. *ibid.* from p. 250 to 271. I hope, that in the preceding work, chap. 1. I have not omitted any material observation of this excellent writer; it is to be lamented that his work is now extremely scarce.

2dly. *The Conduct of Fanatics.*

P. 93. “Enthusiasts are overpowered by religious melancholy and abstraction, devoted to excessive mortifications and fantastic penances, &c. They trample on the restraints of order and decency; are impatient to court persecution, &c. are alienated from the relations and business of common life, &c.”

P. 241. “Are frequently impatient of contradiction, and apt to persecute, &c.”

P. 220. “Have sometimes indulged themselves in vices, &c.”

Vid. Beaufobre’s *Histoire du Manichees*. Liv. 2. chap. 3. p. 189. Amsterdam, 1734. “Manes, to give his errors a divine authority, having discovered in a solitary place a cave, which contained an excellent fountain, he concealed provisions there, and then gave notice to his disciples, that he was going to be exalted to heaven, where he would remain one
“ year,

“ year, at the end of which, he would return to find them.
 “ He then shut himself up in his cave, and it was there in silence and solitude that he formed his system of philosophy and religion; and wrote his book, which he enriched with beautiful figures, in order to embody his subtle imaginations with a sort of sensible and luminous body. In thus retiring to solitude, he imitated, says Beaufobre, his predecessor Zoroaster, who had used exactly the same artifice.”

The Docetæ, before Manes, had maintained, that the word had only taken the exterior figure of a man. The Encratites had condemned marriage and the use of meats; these two heresies were the natural consequences of the false principle that matter, and by consequence flesh, was in itself evil, the Manicheans having adopted this principle, adopted these consequences.

“ Mahomet imitated Manes. God, says Abulfeda, chap. 7. from his 25th to his 40th year, inspired Mahomet with a love of solitude; he lived retired, and passed one month in the grotto of Mount Haram: in this retirement, in his 40th year, came that night, in which, says the Arabian historian, God glorious and supreme, honored him with the most distinguished honor.—Gabriel descended from heaven, and said to him, read—I know not how to read, said Mahomet;—† read, says the angel, in the name of God the Creator, who formed man by uniting the sexes. Read, in the name of the adorable God: he taught man to avail himself of the pen: he darts into his soul the ray of science. Mahomet recited these verses, and advanced into the middle of the mountain, and heard a heavenly voice, which repeated these words: Mahomet, you are the apostle of God, and I am the angel Gabriel.”—Such was the commencement and the proof of Mahomet’s divine mission; but of this scene he was the only witness, and unable to produce any proof from miracles required to be believed on his word.

Brachmans. Bayle’s Dictionary, Vol. I. p. 706.

“ The Brachmans of Bengal lead a very austere life; they go bare-headed and bare-footed in burning sand, and live

† The first verses of the Coran, chap. 96. Vid. Savary’s translation.

“ only

“ only upon herbs. They have very odd opinions about ne-
 “ thingness; and a morality which has a great affinity with the
 “ visions of our Quietists—they carry so far the apathia or in-
 “ difference to which they refer all holiness, that a man must
 “ become a stone or a statue to acquire the perfection of it.”

Account of Darma, an enthusiast of Japan. Vid. Kemp-
 fer's History of Japan, Vol. II. 1st Appendix, p. 3. translated
 by J. G. Schewickzer. Lond. 1727.

“ About the year of Christ 519, this Darma came into Ja-
 “ pan; his design was to bring the inhabitants of that popu-
 “ lous country to the knowledge of God, and to preach his
 “ gospel and religion to them, as the true and only one which
 “ would lead them to salvation; nor was it only with his doc-
 “ trine that he endeavoured to make himself useful to men,
 “ and acceptable to God; he went still farther, and strove
 “ for divine grace, by leading an austere and exemplary life;
 “ exposing himself to all the injuries of the weather; chastiz-
 “ ing and mortifying his body, and subduing the passions of
 “ his mind; he lived only upon vegetables, and thought this to
 “ be the highest degree of holiness to pass days and nights in
 “ an uninterrupted *Satori*; that is, a contemplation of the di-
 “ vine Being; to deny all manner of rest and relaxation to the
 “ body, and to consecrate the mind entirely, and without in-
 “ termission to God, was what he took to be the sincerest re-
 “ pentance, and the most eminent degree of perfection human
 “ nature could attain to. After a continued waking of many
 “ years, he at last grew so weary of his fatigues and fasting,
 “ that he fell asleep. Awaking the next morning, and with
 “ sorrow, remembering that he had broke his vow, he resolved
 “ to take a sincere repentance; and in the first place, lest the
 “ like accident should happen to him hereafter, he cut off both
 “ his eye-lids, as the instruments and ministers of his crime,
 “ &c. &c.”

Vid. the same author's account of the *Jummas*, a religious
 order in Japan, who spend most of their time in going up and
 down holy mountains, walking themselves in cold water in the
 midst of winter, &c. lb. vol. 1, b. 3, chap. v. p. 232.

Vid. Churchill's Collection of Voyages, Lond. 1764, vol. I.
 p. 533, and v. 2. p. 213, for Candidius's and Neuhof's Account

of

of the island of Formosa, where the rites of religion are performed by women, who have tremblings and fits, when, as they conceive, their God speaks to them.

Vid. also Churchill, *ibid.* vol. p. 230, for an account of Devotees in the kingdom of Achim, who speak to nobody, practise the most unnatural gesticulations, and the greatest feverities.

Vid. also *Voyages de Corneille le Brun, par le Moscovie, &c.* printed at Amsterdam, 1718, tome 1, p. 13, for an account of the priests of the Samoyades, who, when consulted upon futurity, never give their answer till they have been for a while, as it were, in a state of death.

For an account of the seditious fanatics, who in the year 1525, rose in Germany, and headed by the enthusiast, Munzer, excited a religious, as well as a civil war, and ran into every act of violence and cruelty which rebellion and enthusiasm could suggest, Vid. Mosheim's *Eccles. Hist. Cent.* 16. chap. ii. sect. 1. subj. 22.

In the year 1533, a number of anabaptists, who surpassed, " says Mosheim, the rest of that fanatical tribe, in the extravagance of their proceedings, the phrenzy of their disordered brains, and the madness of their pretensions and projects, appeared at Munster in Westphalia. They gave themselves out for the messengers of heaven, invested with a divine commission, to lay the foundation of a new government, a holy and spiritual empire, and to destroy all temporal rule and authority, all human and political institutions. They began to erect a new republic, and under the title of new Jerusalem, committed the administration of it to John Bockhott a Taylor of Leyden. Vid. Mosh. *Eccles. Hist. Cent.* 16. chap. iii. sect. 1, subj. 10. vol. 4, p. 102, translated by MacLaine, Lond. 1782, and *Cent.* 16, sect. 3, part 2, chap. iii. *ib.* p. 439.

The Abbe Paris (at whose tomb those pretended miracles were wrought, which Mr. Hume compares with the miracles of the gospel) mortified himself with continual fastings, sold his estate, buried himself in an obscure retirement, tore himself with the most cruel flagellations, and finally brought on his own death, by obstinately abstaining from food. Vid. Douglas's *Criterion*, p. 123.

Monseigneur

Monsieur Montgeron; who defended the cause of the Abbe, was a singular enthusiast; he conceived himself inspired at the tomb of the Abbe by a sudden inspiration. "Having written his narrative of these supposed miracles, and determined to present it to the king in person, he for eight days before he did so, lay on a bed of ashes; bread and water was his only sustenance, and the whole period was spent in devotion. He did not take the least pains to escape the imprisonment, which he knew was determined against him, on account of this book; but waited in his house with a kind of impatience for the Lettre de Cachet." Vid. Douglas's Criterion, p. 220 to 223. and Dr. Elrington's Sermons on Miracles, from 237 to 240. and the notes 340.

The French prophets were guilty of * breach of faith; † they took up arms against their sovereign; ‡ they destroyed houses and churches; § they undermined the authority of the scripture, and || they manifested the most excessive rage, and employed the most abusive terms against the clergy. ¶ They also decry'd human learning as wholly useless and pernicious, and superseded by the inspiration they enjoyed.

For an account of the celebrated fanatic of Florence, Girolano Savanarola, consult Guiccardini's History, book, 2 and 3, or Mr. Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de Medici, vol. 2, p. 158—238—266, &c. He told the citizens of Florence that he had himself been the ambassador of the Florentines to heaven, and that Christ had condescended to be their peculiar monarch, and that the legislative power ought to be extended to the citizens at large. On the defeat and execution of the adherents to the family of the De Medici, which Savanarola instigated, Florence assumed the appearance of a theocracy, of which he was the prophet, the legislator, and the judge. Domenico, one of his principal disciples, in a contest with the Franciscan friars, transported with zeal for the interests of his master, proposed to confirm the truth of his doctrines by walking through the flames, provided any of his adversaries would submit to a similar test: such was the enthusiasm of the moment, one of the Franciscans accepted the challenge; the com-

* Vid. Spinkes, ut supra, p. 430.

§ Ib. 470.

|| Ib. 472.

† Ib. 451.

¶ 468.

‡ Ib. 464.

bustibles were prepared; Savanarola and his champion appeared; thundering with a tremendous voice, the psalm, "*Exsurgat Deus, & Dissipentur Inimici ejus*;" but finding the Franciscan was not to be deterred, either by his vociferations, or the sight of the flames, he had recourse to another expedient; and insisted that his champion Domenico, when he entered the fire, should bear the host along with him; this sacrilegious proposal shocked the whole assembly; it destroyed the credit of Savanarola, he was dragged to prison, and afterwards put to the torture: here he acknowledged the folly of his pretensions to supernatural aid, and with his champion Domenico, and another attendant, was first strangled, and then committed to the flames. Savanarola was much addicted to prophecy; he predicted degradation and banishment to Lorenzo de Medici, which never took place, &c. &c.

3dly. *The stile of fanatical writings.*

P. 126.—"Obscurity and extravagance, self-exaltation and uncharitableness, are the natural characters of enthusiastic compositions.—The stile is full of mysterious and metaphorical allusions.—Common events are spoken of as secret Providences; uncommon, as decided miracles, &c.

For specimens of this, for I do not choose to transcribe them, my reader may, if he pleases, consult Stillingfleet, as quoted above, p. 99; for the Mysticism of St. Juliana, and the mystical language of Sancta Sophia, vid. Ludovicus Blossius, in his spiritual institutions, &c. &c. and consult Stillingfleet, ut supra, p. 124 to 132, where he will find abundance about abstractedness of life—mental prayers—passive unions—a deiform fund of the soul—a state of introversion—of the soul's being in a vacuity, and receiving God in the pure fund of the spirit—of the simple essence of the soul being stamped with a divine impression, from whence ariseth a superessential life, &c. and if the reader wishes for an example of the language of the quietists, I give it him in the words of Bruyere and Madame Guyon, as quoted by Bayle—"I desire you to observe, says

Bayle, that this monster of indifferency is the darling doctrine of the quietists, and that according to them the true felicity consists in nothingness. He then quotes from Bruyere—
 “ Then in the three-fold silence of words, thoughts and desires,
 “ finding himself in a spiritual sleep, in a mystical drunkenness,
 “ all the suspended powers are recalled from the circumference
 “ to the centre. God, who is that centre, makes the soul feel
 “ him by divine touches, by a taste, by illapses, by unspeakable
 “ suävities;” and the words of Madame Guyon—“ a spiritual
 “ soul ought to be indifferent in all things, either for the body
 “ or the soul, or for temporal or eternal goods, and leave
 “ what is past in forgetfulness, and things to come to the Pro-
 “ vidence of God, and not to enjoy the present, &c. &c.”

Vid. the strange opinion of certain Grecian Mystiques about the possibility of a man (scil. a saint) receiving and possessing the very entire substance of the Holy Spirit—Beausobre’s *Histoire de Manichees*, &c. part 2, liv. 1, chap. ii. in fine, p. 268. For further examples of mysticism consult the writings of Jacob Behmen, whose disciples acknowledge, or rather glory, that they are unintelligible. Vid. Arnold *Hist. Theologiæ Mysticæ*, p. 592.

4thly. *The Doctrines of Fanatics, particularly their moral Doctrines.*

Supra, P. 220. “ Enthusiasts teach men to seek
 “ and pray for secret illuminations, &c.” “ Moral
 “ rectitude and practical piety are despised or under-
 “ valued”—“ hence the vices in which fanatics
 “ have sometimes indulged themselves, &c.—“ they
 “ seldom exhort to sober self-government, seldom
 “ enforce the duties of social life.”

P. 225.—“ They are prone to believe they have
 “ already attained the summit of moral perfection.”

P. 227.—“ They despise external helps to religion.”

P. 236.

P. 236.—“ Fanaticism has generally carried with it a levelling principle in political affairs.”

P. 241.—“ Fanatics are severe in condemning those who differ from them.”

P. 273.—“ The devotion of fanatics is gloomy and extravagant ;—their principles of social conduct unnatural ;—their ideas of self-regulation harsh and unpracticable, &c.”

Of the principles of the mystic theology among the Christians, which was derived from the fanaticism of the modern platonics, Vid. Mosheim de Reb. Christianis ante Constant. p. 314. He gives this account from Philo—“ The soul rising above every perceivable existence, or sensible essence, is seized with the love of the spiritual world, and having contemplated in that the patterns and ideas of the sensible objects which it here beholds, and the admirable beauties of these ideas, it is hurried away by a sober intoxication, and, like the Corybantes, full of inspiration, is then captivated by another far more exalted love, by which, raised to the summit of all intelligence, it seems to tend to the supreme king, and then upon the soul desirous of contemplating it, is poured a pure and unmixed ray of light like a torrent, so that the eye of the soul is overpowered by its splendor, &c. &c.”

Of the rise of the Ascetics, who adopted, as means of perfection, watching, abstinence from wine, flesh and marriage, and who would not engage in commerce, Vid. Mosheim Eccl. Hist. Cent. 2d, part 2d, chap. 3d, they derived their rules from the fanatical discipline of the modern platonics. It is remarkable, that they were the first Christians who used pious frauds. Vid. Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, b. 7, chap. i. Ib. chap. ii. It is worthy of notice, that, according to Bingham, “ the Ascetics were men of an active life, living in cities as other men, differing only in this, that they were more intent and zealous in attempting greater heights and heroic acts of virtue.—It was not till the 4th century that monks arose, who retired from the business and conver-

“sation of the world, for they either lived in cells by themselves, or in monasteries, in mountains and wildernesses—some spending years standing on the top of pillars, &c. &c. Bingham notices the Sarabaitæ, an order of monks, who did not, like the others, retire to the wilderness, but lived chiefly in cities and castles, where every thing they did might be seen and valued of men.—They fasted to an extraordinary degree; but if ever there came a feast day, they indulged in riot and excess.” Bing. b. 7, chap. ii. sect. 4.

For a more full account consult Mosheim de Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, Sæculum Secundum, sect. 35, p. 310.

Montanus was one of the most remarkable and the earliest enthusiasts in the Christian church;—he gave himself out as the immediate organ of the Paraclete or Comforter;—he pretended that Christ and his apostles, to indulge the infirmities of men, had left an imperfect system of morality;—he added great austerities;—he looked upon it as criminal to fly from persecution;—he was a declared enemy to philosophy, arts, and learning. For an account of the Montanists, consult Mosheim’s Eccles. Hist. Cent. 2d part 2. chap. v. Euseb. Eccles. Hist. b. 5, chap. xvi. and indeed all the writers of the early sects, especially Mosheim de Reb. Chris. ante Constantinum Sec. 2um. sect. 66, and a History of Montanism by Mr. Lee, annexed to the 4th edition of Dr. Hickes’s Spirit of Enthusiasm Exorcised, printed in Lond. 1709. This is a very full and curious, and seems to be a very candid treatise.

Montanus had amongst his followers two women, Maximilla and Priscilla, who uttered prophecies with agitations and convulsions. They prophesied calamities to the Roman empire, and the consummation of all things to follow their deaths.

Mosheim in his Eccles. Hist. cent. 12, par. 2, chap. v. “tells us, that a number of fanatics at that period infested the Greek and Eastern churches—who professed to believe in a double Trinity, rejected wedlock, abstained from flesh, treated with the utmost contempt the sacrament of baptism, and the Lord’s supper, as also all the various branches of external worship, and placed the essence of religion in internal prayer alone, &c.”

Stillington

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Stillingsfleet ut supra, p. 100, quotes abundant authorities to prove that St. Benedict was a hater of human learning.—“ He remained three years in a cave absorbed in devotion ;—he conquered his carnal desires, by rolling himself naked among thorns and nettles. St. Francis, whose father had confined him with dark rooms and chains, but on finding no amendment, at length discharged him, when St. Francis (says Bonaventure) stripped himself stark naked, and said thus to his father, “ *hiuberto I called thee father on earth ; but henceforward I can surely say, our Father which art in heaven ;* as if, adds Stillingsfleet, his duty to God and his parents had been inconsistent.”—Bernard, who joined him, opened the gospel three times, and the first three sentences he saw were to be the rule of their order.

For instances of enthusiasm favouring vice, consult what Stillingsfleet proves of the mendicant friars, and the *Evangelium Æternum*, published by them, A. D. 1254, p. 105.

Of their most innocent opinions, one was, that the New Testament was to continue in force only six years from that time.—That there were none fit to instruct the people who did not go barefoot ;—that Christ and his apostles were not perfect in the contemplative life ;—that the order of the clergy shall perish, &c. &c. &c.

Of the doctrines of the Beguini, the Fratricelli, and the Beguardi, who arose in Narbonne, in the time of Clement V. and whose leader was Petrus Johannes, Stillingsfleet gives this account.—Their doctrines may be reduced to four heads—

1st. Evangelical poverty. They said that the apostles had nothing proper or in common, because they were perfectly poor, and that the enjoying any thing, though in common, takes off from the perfection of it, &c. &c.

2d. They maintained the absolute unlawfulness of swearing.

3dly. The doctrine of perfection—which was “ that a man in this life may attain to so great perfection, as to live without sin ;—that a man who hath attained to such a degree is above ordinances, i. e. he need not fast and pray as others do ;—that such as are perfect have the spirit of liberty, and are not subject to human ordinances, either of church or state ;—that every intellectual being hath enough within itself
“ to

" to make it happy, or a light within, so that it doth not need
 " any external light of glory in order thereto ;—that to live in
 " the exercise of moral virtues, is an argument of a state of
 " imperfection, and that one truly perfect is above them ; from
 " hence they accounted all actions which were designed to
 " satisfy natural inclinations to be indifferent, and so looked on
 " unclean mixtures as no sins.—The Beguardi sometimes said,
 " that a perfect soul being reduced to God loseth its own will,
 " which being supposed, they say, they may do any thing which
 " their affection puts them upon without sin, because they have
 " no will of their own, &c."

" Not very dissimilar to these were the Pseudo Apostolici in
 " Italy, in the end of the thirteenth century, who went up and
 " down in the streets barefooted, and what they eat was pub-
 " licly, and only what was given them. The pope Boniface
 " the VIII. instituted a crusade against them ;—they were with
 " great difficulty subdued, for they bore all extremities of
 " hunger and cold in the Alps rather than yield.—They main-
 " tained that they only were the church of God ;—that no one
 " can be saved who is not of their order ;—that no layman
 " ought to pay tithes to priest or prelate, who lives not in the
 " same perfection and poverty which the apostles did, &c. &c.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century arose another sect of
 enthusiasts in Spain, named Alumbrados and Illuminati.
 Spondanus gives this account of them, " that under the pre-
 " tence of mental prayer and divine contemplation, and union
 " with God, they despised the use of sacraments, of preaching,
 " the scriptures, and all holy exercises, and did extol the others
 " so highly, that by this means they said that would not be sin
 " in them which was so in others, and by this means they
 " committed impurities."

For instances of the immoralities of fanatics, Vid. Bayle's
 Dictionary, Article Priscelliani—notes.

LEAST my young readers should be misled by the eloquent, but grossly partial representation, which Hume has given of the first reformers from popery, to rank them with the fanatics who, in other periods, have disturbed Christianity, I beg leave to transcribe a single paragraph from Dr. Maclaine's 1st Appendix, inserted in Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. of Cent. 16, chap. iv. end of 1st sect.—“The principal reformers were Luther, Zuinglius, Calvin, Melancthon, Bucer, Martyr, Bullinger, Beza, Œcolampadius, and others. Now these were all men of learning, who came forth into the field of controversy (in which the fate of future ages, with respect to liberty, was to be decided) with a kind of arms that did not at all give them the aspect of persons agitated by the impulse, or seduced by the delusions of fanaticism. They pretended not to be called to the work they undertook by visions, or internal illuminations and impulses; they never attempted to work miracles, nor pleaded a divine commission; they taught no new religion; nor laid claim to any extraordinary vocation; they respected government, practised and taught submission to civil rulers, and desired only the liberty of that conscience which God has made free; they maintained that the faith of Christians was to be determined by the word of God alone; they had recourse to reason and argument, to the rules of sound criticism, and to the authority and light of history; they translated the scriptures into the popular languages of different countries, and appealed to them as the only test of religious truth; they exhorted Christians to judge for themselves, to search the scriptures, to break asunder the bonds of ignorant prejudice and lawless authority, and to assert that liberty of conscience, to which they had an undeniable right as reasonable beings.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

- Page 9, line 16, for *Nathaniel*, read Nathanael.
 16, last line, for *Nazarites*, read Nazarenes.
 124, line 3, for *unparalled*, read unparalleled.
 130, line 9, before blindness, insert their.
 141, line 10, for *Nazareth*, read Nazarene.
 149, line 20, for *subject*, read subjects.
 155, line 15, for *universally*, read unavoidably.
 156, line 23, for *end*, read ends.
 158, line 12, before visions, insert the.
 185, line 2, for *Colossi*, read Colosse.
 221, line 1, for *diversified*, read diversified.
 265, line 10, for *thmselves*, read themselves.
 316, line 25, for *of an event*, read or of an event.
 317, line 32, for *martia*, read *martia*.

